

STANDING OUTSIDE THE GATES:
A STUDY OF WOMEN'S ORDINATION IN THE PALI VINAYA

by

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ABSTRACT

The story of the origins of women's ordination into the Buddhist monastic order (*sangha*) is pivotal to the study of Theravāda Buddhist female renunciation--textual, historical, and contemporary. The story is not, however, easy to understand. It reflects an irreducible ambivalence toward women's renunciation. Though the story acknowledges women's capacity to attain *nibbāna* (liberation from the bonds of rebirth), it also attributes to women's presence in the order a halving of the lifetime of the "true *dhamma*" (*saddhamma*, the Buddha's teachings which propel individuals to realization of *nibbāna*), and presents the Buddha as requiring the formal subordination of the women's order to the men's in an attempt to minimize the damage their presence will bring.

This thesis provides an interpretation of the story in its relationship to the Pali *Vinaya* (the monastic code of rules and regulations). I argue that the story is a literary construct which functions to legitimize the vision of an ideal Buddhist renunciant that pervades the Pali *Vinaya*. Throughout the *Vinaya*, women (even ordained women) symbolize the outside world beyond the boundaries. They are that from which monks need protection and against which the *Vinaya* conception of

identity is formed.

This thesis makes four contributions to the field of Buddhist studies. It is the first full-length study of the story of women's ordination. It is also the first study of the Pali *Vinaya* to consider seriously the impact of gender on its categories, assumptions, and overall structure. As such, the thesis acts as a corrective to scholarship on Buddhism which assumes that the story is an accurate reflection of women's role in an early period of Buddhism's development. Additionally, the thesis could provide the basis for a more nuanced investigation of the social history of Indian Buddhism that accommodates the constructed nature of the texts.

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To Carole and Murray

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GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

AN. *Anguttara Nikāya*.

arahant. One who has attained *nibbāna*.

āsavas. "That which flows". The term refers to intoxicants and bodily discharges, but has strong psychological connotations of ideas of sensuality, lust for life, speculation, and ignorance that obstruct one's path towards *nibbāna*.

BD. *Book of Discipline*, I.B. Horner's translation of the Pali *Vinaya*.

bhikkhu. A fully ordained male Buddhist renunciant.

bhikkhunī. A fully ordained female Buddhist renunciant.

bodhi. The "awakening" the Buddha experienced when he attained enlightenment.

brahmacariya. The lifestyle of renunciation with strong implications of celibacy.

Cullavagga. The "lesser division", or smaller section of texts in the *Khandhaka* category of the Pali *Vinaya*.

dhamma. The Buddha's teachings and the Truth they convey.

DN. *Digha Nikāya*.

garudhamma. The "weighty rules" the Buddha imposes on women as a condition of ordination.

Khandhakas. The collection of texts in the Pali *Vinaya* that prescribe rules and procedures pertaining to the administration of the *sangha* as a corporate body.

Mahāvagga. The "greater division", or larger section of texts in the *Khandhaka* category of the Pali *Vinaya*.

MN. *Majjhima Nikāya*.

nibbāna. Liberation from the bonds of rebirth, the

soteriological goal articulated in Pali literature.

Pārājika. The categories of offense for which a *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhunī* faces automatic and irrevocable expulsion from the *sangha*.

parisuddhi. "Complete purity".

Pātimokkha. The code of rules pertaining to individual *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* that is contained in the *Suttavibhanga*. The *bhikkhu-Pātimokkha* contains 227 rules and the *bhikkhunī-Pātimokkha* contains 311.

Samantapāsādikā. The sixth century commentary on the *Vinaya* by Buddhaghosa.

sangha. The Buddhist order of renunciants.

Saṅghādisesa. The second category of rules in the *Suttavibhanga* for which a *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhunī* faces temporary suspension of *sangha* participation.

sikkhāpada. "Rules of training", the term for individual rules in the *Pātimokkha*.

SN. *Samyutta Nikāya*.

Suttavibhanga. The collection of texts in the Pali *Vinaya* which contains the *Pātimokkha* rules, explanatory stories, explanations of the terms of each rule, and case studies describing their application in various circumstances.

upasaka. A male lay supporter of the Buddhist *sangha*.

upasampadā. "Ordination", the ritual in which a person becomes fully ordained in the *sangha*.

upāsikā. A female lay supporter of the Buddhist *sangha*.

uposatha. A bi-monthly ritual required of all ordained members of the *sangha* in which offenses are confessed and amended.

INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time ... in the early decades of the fifth century B.C.E. in North India, a man of extraordinary talents attained an extraordinary state of spiritual awakening and made an extraordinary decision--to open up his monastic order to women. He was not the first religious leader of his time and place to do so (his competitor, Mahāvīra, had apparently already ordained women), nor is he presented as happy with the prospects of women renunciants. Yet, in making this decision, the Buddha overturned the virtual exclusion of women from renunciant practice that was advocated by other religious leaders contemporary to him.¹ He opened a religious option, a new religious path for women which they are recorded to have

¹For a survey of women's religious practices in *Brahmanical* tradition at the time of the Buddha, see Katherine Young, "Hinduism" (in *Women in World Religions*, ed. by Arvind Sharma, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1987, pp. 59-103), esp. pp. 60-72. Young charts a progression in the *Vedas*, *Brāhmaṇas*, and *Upaniṣads* of increasing exclusion of women from *Brahmanical* cultic practices concomitant with the increasing formality of the rituals and a decreasing level of education available to women. In the *Upaniṣads*, which emphasized asceticism, and were roughly contemporary with Buddhism and Jainism, women are discouraged from pursuing an ascetic lifestyle.

embraced in great numbers and with much joy.²

In this legendary account, the decision ultimately rests with the Buddha but it might be more accurate to attribute the origination of this path for women to the persistence and ingenuity of his aunt and foster-mother, Mahāpajāpatī, who represented women's desire for ordination, and who was the first woman to don the yellow robes of a Buddhist renunciant. She is recorded to have donned those robes on her own volition, after the Buddha had rejected her petition for ordination. The Buddha acceded only after she had "ordained" herself and her followers and only upon the intercession of his closest companion and personal attendant, Ānanda. From this legendary beginning, the Buddhist order of female renunciants, the *bhikkhunī-sangha*, encountered ambivalence, if not antagonism, from the highest authority in the *sangha*.

This ambivalence towards the *bhikkhunī-sangha* also characterizes its history. The sources for the history of Buddhism in India are scant, but what records there are (inscriptions, travel diaries of Chinese travellers, commentaries and biographies) document the decline and disappearance of the *bhikkhunī-sangha* centuries before that of their male colleagues in the *bhikkhu-sangha*. Nancy Falk attributes this

²See, for example, Dhammapala's account of women flocking to the order. *Paramatthadīpanī*, trans. by C.A.F. Rhys Davids, *Psalms of the Sisters* (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1909; rpr. 1964), p. 8.

premature decline to the ambivalence in Buddhist texts towards *bhikkhunīs*, and, in particular, to the discriminatory provisions the Buddha demanded as a condition of women's ordination. *Bhikkhunīs* are prohibited from instructing *bhikkhus*, which, in Falk's analysis means that *bhikkhunīs* would never lead the community, participate in public debates, or incur the gratitude of junior *bhikkhus*. All this "communicated a damaging image to the greater world that picked up the monastic community's tab, because they affirmed that the monks were the more significant and worthier part of such a community."³

Today, in Sri Lanka, the situation for female renunciants is even more ambiguous as the system of formal ordination has broken down and women can no longer attain full ordination. According to the *Vinaya* (the monastic code of rules and regulations), a quorum of ten *bhikkhunīs* and ten *bhikkhus* is

³Nancy Falk, "The Case of the Vanishing Nuns: The Fruits of Ambivalence in Ancient Indian Buddhism" (in *Unspoken Worlds: Women's Religious Lives in Non-Western Cultures*, ed. by N. Falk and R. Gross, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980, pp. 207-224), p. 216. See also Gregory Schopen, "On Monks, Nuns and 'Vulgar' Practices: The Introduction of the Image Cult into Indian Buddhism" (*Artibus Asiae* 49 [1988-89]: 153-168). Schopen attributes this decline, not to an inherent prejudice against nuns in the texts (the prominence of nuns in inscriptions prior to the fourth-fifth century CE counters this), but to the rise of Mahāyana. As Schopen points out, despite the textual injunctions, in inscriptions, women are referred to as having knowledge of the Three *Pitakas* (the whole of Buddhist canonical literature, p. 161), as being "versed in the *sūtras*" and as having pupils (p. 164).

required to confer ordination. A point was reached in Sri Lankan history during the tenth to eleventh centuries where there were no longer ten *bhikkhunīs* to perform this task. The ordination lineage died out.⁴ Buddhist women today pursue the renunciatory lifestyle on their own, but their position is ambiguous. Though they wear the yellow robes of an ordained renunciant, their status in the *sangha* is that of especially devout lay-followers.⁵

There are some people who want to reinstate the ordination system, but, as this would entail the acceptance of ordination from Mahāyana *bhikṣuṇīs* by Theravāda practitioners, there is much opposition in the Theravāda elite.⁶ The

⁴The *bhikkhu-sangha* in Sri Lanka suffered a similar decline in the late seventeenth century, but monks were brought from Thailand to reinstitute ordination on the island. See Richard Gombrich, *Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon* (London, 1971; rpr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991), p. 41.

⁵They also assume titles that reflect their ambiguous status, being called either *upāsikās*, which in the *Vinaya* is a term for female lay-followers, or *dasa-sil-mattawa*, "the mothers of the ten precepts". For a discussion, see Tessa Bartholomeusz, *Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 274-295; Elizabeth Nissan, "Recovering Practice" (*South Asia Research* 4 [1984]: 32-49); and Lowell Bloss, "The Female Renunciants of Sri Lanka: The *Dasasilmattawa*" (*Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 10 [1987]: 7-31).

⁶The opposition centres on conservatism in the Theravāda tradition. Believing that Pali texts and the tradition based on them represent an accurate reflection of the Buddha's words

majority of women renunciants, however, resist the movement to revive formal ordination since, if they were formally ordained, they would be subject to the rules instituted in *Cullavagga X*, which explicitly subordinate *bhikkhunīs* to *bhikkhus*. As informal renunciants, "lay nuns", they have much more autonomy than they would have as fully ordained nuns.⁷ Despite the opposition, there are Theravāda women renunciants who have been formally ordained by a quorum consisting of ordained Mahāyana *bhikṣunīs* and Theravāda *bhikkhus* in California. Their ordination is not recognized by the *bhikkhu*

and intentions, monks resist women receiving ordination from other schools and applying that ordination to their Theravāda affiliation. As Mohan Wijayaratna says, "si des Ceylanaïses ou des Thailandaïses [Theravāda Buddhists] obtenaient l'ordination dans une école bouddhique de Hongkong ou de Taiwan [Mahāyāna Buddhism], elles appartiendraient à l'école dont elles auraient reçu l'ordination." *Les moniales bouddhistes: naissance et développement du monachisme féminin* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1991), p. 166. This argument is countered by supporters of reinstating the *bhikkhunī-sangha*, who point out that the Sri Lankan lineage is the basis of the formal ordination of Chinese *bhikṣunīs*. According to the biographies of Chinese nuns, the *Pi-Ch'iu-Ni Chuan*, at least two separate groups of Sri Lankan *bhikkhunīs* travelled to China in 429 CE and 434 CE and conferred ordination on the *bhikṣunīs* living there who had been ordained only by *bhikṣus*. Kathryn Ann Cissell, "The *Pi-Ch'iu-Ni Chuan*: Biographies of Famous Chinese Nuns from 317-516 C.E." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972), pp. 63-65. Sri Lankan monks living in North America who conferred what they consider to be a Theravāda ordination on Sri Lankan lay nuns cite this historical precedent. Tessa Bartholomeusz, *Women under the Bo Tree*, p. 188.

⁷Tessa Bartholomeusz, *Women Under the Bo Tree*, p. 137; Gombrich and Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*, p. 291; Elizabeth Nissan, "Recovering Practice", p. 45; and Lowell Bloss, "The Female Renunciants", p. 19.

hierarchy in Sri Lanka, but this does not unduly concern the women. According to Tessa Bartholomeusz, "they believe that they can walk in the footsteps of the Buddha without being recognized as members of the monastic order. In other words, the *sangha* is irrelevant to their vocation."⁸

Perhaps the *sangha* has always been irrelevant to the practice of Buddhist women renunciants. It is difficult not to draw parallels between the textual presentation of Mahāpajāpatī and the attitudes and actions of the current lay nuns described by Tessa Bartholomeusz in *Women under the Bo Tree*.⁹ Both practice their religious vocation in spite of clear opposition from authoritative figures in the *sangha*. In fact, a Sri Lankan friend of mine referred casually to Mahāpajāpatī as "the first feminist". For her, as for the majority of lay nuns Tessa Bartholomeusz interviewed, the important thing is not the discriminatory rules of the *sangha* but the religious vocation women have pursued within Buddhism.¹⁰

This does not, however, nullify the negative consequences of institutional discrimination against *bhikkhunīs*. One of

⁸*Women under the Bo Tree*, p. 183.

⁹This pattern also holds for the origins of the *bhikkhunī-sangha* in Sri Lanka. According to the *Mahāvamsa*, in the early days of the *sangha* in Sri Lanka, women spontaneously assumed a renunciant lifestyle for themselves while they awaited the arrival of Saṅghamittā, the *bhikkhunī* who brought both the cutting from the bo tree and women's ordination to Sri Lanka. See Bartholomeusz, *Women under the Bo Tree*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁰*Ibid*, p. 138.

the major sources of this discrimination is clearly the *Vinaya*, which, like other Pali literary sources, is profoundly ambivalent about women's religious practice. The prescriptions of the *Vinaya* are observed with varying degrees of rigor by contemporary Theravāda monks (in fact, many village monks do not know the *Vinaya* or follow its prescribed rituals),¹¹ and, indeed, may not have consistently informed actual practice throughout the history of Buddhism.¹² The ambivalent attitude towards *bhikkhunīs* in the *Vinaya* may not, therefore, accurately reflect the historical circumstances in which the *bhikkhunī-sangha* originated and developed.¹³ Despite variance

¹¹Michael Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka: An Anthropological and Historical Study* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 142.

¹²Throughout his numerous articles (see the citations in the Bibliography), Gregory Schopen has launched an extended critique of scholarly assumptions about the historical reliability of Buddhist literary sources, in particular those of the Pali Canon. As his studies demonstrate, many of the central ideas and prescriptions found in the texts are either non-existent, contradicted, or understood differently in epigraphical sources. For example, the concept of the *arahant* (a "perfected one" who has attained *nibbāna*) is not found in inscriptions on stupas that are clearly dedicated to important "local saints". "An Old Inscription from Amarāvātī and the Cult of the Local Dead in Indian Monasteries" (*Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14 [1991]: 99-137). For a concise discussion of his views, see "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism" (*History of Religions* 31 [1991]: 1-23).

¹³In fact, the historical conditions, insofar as we can reconstruct them from the epigraphical record and other textual sources, appear better for *bhikkhunīs* than the *Vinaya* would lead us to believe. See the discussion in n. 3 above; R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, "Subtile Silks of Ferreous Firmness: Buddhist Nuns in Ancient Sri Lanka and their Role in the Propagation of Buddhism" (*Sri Lankan Journal of the Humanities* 14 [1988, pub. in 1990]: 1-59); and Jonathan Walters, "A Voice

in observance of *Vinaya* prescriptions and uncertainty about the historical reliability of the *Vinaya*, however, the *Vinaya* is consistently used by contemporary monks as the standard of authority.¹⁴

Although the current revival in Sri Lanka and its emphasis on texts is influenced by "Protestant Buddhism", the transformation of Buddhism within the last century in response to colonialism and Christian missionary activities, the emphasis on the authority of the *Vinaya* is not new.¹⁵ The Chinese monk, Fa-Hsien travelled to India in the early fifth century C.E. and Hsuan Tsang repeated the trip in the mid-seventh century CE. Both did so explicitly to gather authoritative copies of the *Vinaya*.¹⁶ Moreover, both travellers used

from the Silence: The Buddha's Mother's Story" (*History of Religions* 33 [1994]: 358-379).

¹⁴See for example the preceding discussion of opposition to the restitution of the *bhikkhunī-sangha* on the basis of *Vinaya* prescriptions. According to Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, there is considerable opposition to the current practice of monks accepting salaried jobs because it violates *Vinaya* prescriptions. Still, the monastic hierarchy has not enforced its disapproval by reprimanding these monks. *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 229-231. In the same work, the authors affirm: "Authority lies in 'the word of the Buddha,' that is, the Pali Canon, as mediated by the Sangha and to some extent also by texts deriving from that tradition. The tradition explicitly states that when it has fallen on hard times it is restored by learned monks who repeat and transmit the scriptures" (p. 446).

¹⁵Gombrich and Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*, pp. 220-221.

¹⁶Samuel Beal, trans., *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World* (London, 1884; rpr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), p. xviii and xxiii.

knowledge of *Vinaya* and observance of *Vinaya* prescriptions to assess the level of dedication of the monks whose monasteries they visited.¹⁷

The *Vinaya* is of crucial importance in understanding Buddhist monasticism, male or female. The *Vinaya* of a particular school is believed by adherents of that school to preserve the exact words of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*) and the renunciatory path he laid out to make *nibbāna* ("liberation", freedom from the bonds of rebirth) a possibility for everyone. The authority of the *Vinaya* and other texts stems from this assumption.

As we have seen, this authority is currently being used by Sri Lankan Buddhist leaders to limit the religious options available to women. In their eyes, the path opened up by the Buddha 2,500 years ago is closed until the time of the next Buddha, Maitreya, approximately 2,500 years from now: only Buddhas can establish monastic orders for men or women.¹⁸

Goals of My Study

In this thesis, I investigate the contours of the authority vested in the *Vinaya* as it pertains to Theravāda *bhikkhunīs*. I focus in particular on the story of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination since this story is of singular importance to contemporary female renunciants and because it encapsulates

¹⁷Ibid, see for example, pp. xii, lxx, 46, 81, etc.

¹⁸Tessa Bartholomeusz, *Women under the Bo Tree*, p. 164.

the ambiguous treatment of *bhikkhunīs* in Pali literature and Theravāda history. The goal of my thesis is to interpret the story using as my point of access its intrinsic ambiguity.

The story appears in the *Suttapīṭaka* (the collection of discourses on doctrine) as well as the *Vinayapīṭaka*.¹⁹ I analyze it only in its *Vinaya* context. As the story of the origins of the *bhikkhunī-sangha* which precedes rules pertaining to the *bhikkhunī-sangha*, it is functionally equivalent to other *Vinaya* narratives such as that which explains the origins of the *bhikkhu-sangha* (*Mahāvagga* I 6-79). My study, therefore, is confined to understanding the story in its relationship to the *Vinaya*.

In detailing the events leading up to Mahāpajāpatī's ordination and predicting the consequences of that ordination, the story is also about authority and resistance. Mahāpajāpatī acts to "ordain" herself and her female followers in direct contravention of the Buddha's denial of her request. He finally does agree to allow the ordination of women but imposes a set of eight rules, each of which subordinates *bhikkhunīs* to *bhikkhus*, as a condition for ordination. Moreover, he predicts the halving of the lifetime of *brahmācariya* (the celibate lifestyle) and *saddhamma* (the true teachings) as a direct result of women's presence in the order. The independence and assertiveness Mahāpajāpatī expresses in

¹⁹In the *Suttapīṭaka* it is found in AN IV. 274-279; in the *Vinayapīṭaka*, *Cullavagga* X 1.1-6. The versions are identical.

the story are completely undermined and any chance of recurrence of similar behaviour by her or other *bhikkhunīs* is averted.

The story presents in literary form the complex interaction between power and resistance which contemporary theorists argue characterizes all social systems. The Buddha exerts power over Mahāpajāpatī--the power of denial. Mahāpajāpatī resists by contesting that power and the Buddha reasserts his authority, introducing new measures to inhibit further resistance and an explanation which delegitimizes the basis of such resistance. Action and response shape each other in interaction: the discriminatory rules are a response to Mahāpajāpatī's initiative; Mahāpajāpatī's initiative is a response to the Buddha's denial.

Thus, the story describes an arena in which power is contested and negotiated. Both dominant and subordinate positions, here represented by the Buddha and Mahāpajāpatī, are fluid and interactive. Though the story ends with the Buddha's reassertion of dominance, Mahāpajāpatī has played a powerful role in shaping its contours. As Michael Adas maintains:

subordinate groups play an active role in the construction and continuing reformulation of the systems of social control, rituals of deference, and hegemonic ideologies that do so much to define the conditions under which they live. Modes of resistance and (usually covert) defiance and counter-ideologies are inherent parts of the process of construction and reformulation.... Social control is always contested; deference is always hedged; there are always myths and proverbs, legends and moral convictions, that challenge

the validity of ideologies of dominance.²⁰

The story of Mahāpajāpatī as a whole is clearly not a challenge to the validity of the Vinaya's ideological dominance. In concluding with the Buddha's reassertion of control and delegitimation of resistance, the story declares its allegiance to such dominance. The story is about resistance, but it is not an example of resistance literature:²¹ the resistance Mahāpajāpatī expresses and represents is firmly subsumed by the discourse of dominance. Her voice of resistance is subverted to affirm the ideological dominance: Mahāpajāpatī not only accepts subordination as a condition for her ordina-

²⁰Michael Adas, "South Asian Resistance in Comparative Perspective" (in *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia*, ed. by Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 290-305), p. 305.

²¹This concept of resistance literature and its application in contemporary theory stems directly from three seminal thinkers -- Michel Foucault (cited below, n. 22), Edward Said, *Orientalism* (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1979; originally published by Pantheon Books, 1978), and especially, James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). For a discussion and critique of the application of contemporary theories of resistance, see Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash, "Introduction: Entanglement of Power and Resistance" (in *Contesting Power*, pp. 1-22), and selected essays in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, N.Y.: Routledge, 1995): Jenny Sharpe, "Figures of Colonial Resistance" (pp. 99-103); Stephen Slemon, "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World" (pp. 104-110); Sara Suleri, "The Rhetoric of English India" (pp. 111-116); Ketu Katrak, "Decolonizing Culture: Toward a Theory for Post-colonial Women's Texts" (pp. 255-258); Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and colonial Discourses" (pp. 259-263); and Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (pp. 269-272).

tion, she welcomes it, "as a young man would put on a garland of flowers" (*Cullavagga* X 1.5). In this image, the character of Mahāpajāpatī performs the final act of obeisance to ideological dominance. She is a character whose representation confirms the legitimacy and necessity of *Vinaya* prescriptions against female autonomy.

This representation in the thought of Michel Foucault is intimately related to the production of truth. Foucault defines truth as "the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true." "Truth," he continues, "is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce it and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it."²² To anyone familiar with Buddhist literature, Mahāpajāpatī's challenge to the Buddha's authority and her threat to "true" *dhamma* (*saddhamma*) are obvious heresies. They are profoundly "false" from a doctrinal perspective and are condemned as such in the story and in the *Vinaya* in which the story is embedded. The *Vinaya* itself is an "ensemble of rules" which establishes the true and condemns the false. As such, the *Vinaya* employs tactics of legitimation, it sets up a field of discourse in which opposition is equated with heresy.

²²Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power" (in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow, N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1984, pp. 51-75), p. 74. See also his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (trans. by Alan Sheridan, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 27 and 194.

It is my contention that the presentation of *bhikkhunīs* in the *Vinaya* is an important component of the strategies of legitimation that pervade this discourse. These strategies legitimize a particular conception of what it means to be a Buddhist renunciant. In short, they define Buddhist renunciatory identity.

Some scholars of the *Vinaya* have noted the legitimizing function of *Vinaya* discourse. For the most part, however, they have confined such analysis to the account of the first council, the quasi-historical meeting of prominent *bhikkhus* shortly after the Buddha's death in which the texts were codified and compiled. As we will see below (pp. 197-214), the account is an apt subject for an analysis of textual strategies of legitimation: it contains explicit power relations which are negotiated in a dramatic confrontation between two well-known *bhikkhus*, Ānanda and Mahākassapa; it is explicitly dedicated to defining true doctrine and true discipline; and it has been consciously used by later commentators to legitimize the specific texts of their differing schools of Buddhism.²³

²³Almost all scholars who have studied the first council acknowledge these issues. See Andre Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955); Teitaro Suzuki, "The First Buddhist Council" (*Monist* 14 [1904]: 253-283); Etienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śāka Era* (trans. by Sara Webb-Boin, Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1988), pp. 133-140; Michael Freedman, "The Characterization of Ānanda in the Theravāda: A Hagiographical Study" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, 1977), pp. 442-485; Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "The Buddhist Councils" (*Indian Antiquary* 37 [1908]:

As scholars acknowledge, in the Pali first council account Ānanda clearly represents a voice of resistance. Like Mahāpajāpatī, he is condemned and undermined: his low status is emphasized; he is presented as a disruptive influence in the proceedings; and he is explicitly reprimanded by council members for offenses he committed during the Buddha's lifetime.²⁴ The account clearly produces a characterization which legitimates the emphasis of the *Vinaya* in which it is found.

Yet scholars have refrained from analyzing the rest of the Pali *Vinaya* for similar tactics of legitimation. Instead, scholarly studies tend to focus on issues of history and doctrine, investigating the chronological stratification within *Vinaya* texts, the relative chronologies of differing recensions of the *Vinaya*, and the formulation of doctrine in *Vinaya*.²⁵ Furthermore, even those scholars who have analyzed the legitimating discourse of the first council have ignored the role of women and *bhikkhunīs* in the account. This is quite a striking omission for two of the five offenses for which Ānanda is reprimanded involve his promotion of women:

1-18 and 81-106); and Jotiya Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline: A Study of its Origin and Development in Relation to the Sutta and Vinaya Piṭakas* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena and Co., 1982).

²⁴See my discussion below, pp. 205-213.

²⁵See the citations and discussion in Charles Prebish's annotated survey of *Vinaya* scholarship from the mid 1800's to the present. *A Survey of Vinaya Literature* (Taiwan: Jin Luen Pub., 1994), pp. 127-141.

he allowed women to view the body of the Buddha first, which resulted in its defilement with their tears; and he intervened on behalf of Mahāpajāpatī to effect women's ordination (*Cullavagga* XI 1.10). Scholars have either ignored the gender connotations of these offenses or they have dismissed the importance of these particular charges.²⁶

In my view, the gender connotations of Ānanda's offenses are of crucial importance to understanding the legitimating discourse of the account. Ānanda's association with women and his promotion of *bhikkhunīs* has tainted him with the marginality specific to the feminine. As I shall demonstrate throughout the following chapters, women and *bhikkhunīs* consistently appear in the Pali *Vinaya* as outsiders. They are systematically excluded from full participation in the affairs of the monastic order (the *sangha*); their voices are silenced; their membership is marginalized. In this, the *Vinaya* exemplifies the properties of patriarchal discourse identified by Toril Moi in the course of her discussion of Julia Kristeva's thought:

²⁶Throughout the history of the scholarship on Buddhism in the West, scholars have participated in the patriarchal discourse of many of the texts they study, either ignoring women's presence in the texts or dismissing the impact of women. See Rita Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism* (N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 18-19. Women scholars of Buddhism have tended to focus more on women's presence in the texts, but they themselves have fared no better, receiving little recognition for their accomplishments. See Ursula King, "A Question of Identity: Women Scholars and the Study of Religion" (in *Religion and Gender*, ed. by U. King, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995, pp. 219-244).

If patriarchy sees women as occupying a marginal position within the symbolic order, then it can construe them as the *limit* or borderline of that order. From a phallogocentric point of view, women will then come to represent the necessary frontier between man and chaos; but because of their very marginality they will always seem to recede into and merge with the chaos of the outside. Women seen as the limit of the symbolic order will in other words share in the disconcerting properties of *all* frontiers²⁷

There is no question that *bhikkhunīs* occupy a "marginal position within the symbolic order" of *Vinaya* discourse. In so doing, they reveal the parameters of that symbolic order. In the context of the *Vinaya*, discussions of *bhikkhunīs* help articulate the boundaries that define what it means to be a Buddhist renunciant.

The *Vinaya* is not just a code of rules and regulations that pertain to renunciant behaviour and the administration of the *sangha*; it is also a systematic articulation of renunciant identity, both at a communal and an individual level. In the *Vinaya*, as in other formulations of identity, boundaries play a crucial role.²⁸

²⁷Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 167. Moi continues her thought to state that the consequences of such marginalism are the vilification or veneration of women. In the *Vinaya*, it is difficult to find female models who are venerated. At best, female characters are respected (e.g., the lay-woman Visakhā), but none to my knowledge transcends this. Significantly, Visakhā is a lay-woman. She is firmly outside the margins of the *sangha*. *Bhikkhunīs*, however, are inside the borderline. As fully ordained members of the *sangha*, they are within the limits of the *sangha*. But, as women, they are permanently outside. As such, in Moi's analysis, they provide a point of entry for the "chaos of the outside."

²⁸For discussions of identity and the *Vinaya* see John Holt, *Discipline: The Canonical Buddhism of the Vinayapīṭaka* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), p. 1; Charles Prebish,

As I argue throughout the thesis, boundaries are the key to understanding both the particular renunciant identity formulated in the *Vinaya* and the marginalization of *bhikkhunis*. In the *Vinaya*, identity involves the whole person and the whole community: the self-definition of the individual merges with that of the corporate unit that is the *sangha*. At both an individual and a communal level, the *Vinaya* emphasizes physical containment, social detachment, and emotional control. The body, speech, and mind of both the individual and the *sangha* are subject to boundaries which can neither be transgressed nor penetrated. The rules and procedures of the *Vinaya* are explicitly designed to prohibit transgression and inhibit penetration: they set up boundaries which define and protect the integrity of the person and the community.

My emphasis on boundaries, separation, and purity shares

Buddhist Monastic Discipline: The Sanskrit Prātimokṣa Sūtras of the Mahāsāṃghikas and Mūllasarvāstivādins (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), p. 27; Heinz Bechert, "The Buddhist Saṃgha" (in *Buddhism and Asian History: Religion, History, and Culture. Selections from the Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by Joseph Kitagawa and Mark Cummings, N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987, pp. 289-296), p. 292; and Richard Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), p. 89. For more general discussions of identity in religious texts see Harold Coward, "The Role of Scripture in the Self-definition of Hinduism and Buddhism in India" (*Studies in Religion* 21 [1992]: 129-144), p.141. See also, idem, *Sacred Word and Sacred Text: Scripture in World Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), pp.138-158 and the articles in *Identity Issues and World Religions*, ed. by Victor Hayes (Bedford Park: The Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1986).

obvious parallels with the theory of Mary Douglas.²⁹ In Douglas' theory, these concepts express symbolic classification systems by which social groups make sense and order of their existence. I do not explicitly employ her theory, however, as it neglects power relations between members of social groups. In my analysis, boundaries do not serve only to make sense of the world but to justify and perpetuate the dominance of those who construct boundaries over those considered outside the limits of the boundaries.

Throughout the *Vinaya*, women and *bhikkhunis* symbolize the outside world beyond the boundaries. They are that from which *bhikkhus* and the *sangha* need protection and against which the *Vinaya* conception of identity is formed. They thus play a very important role in the formulation of the particular conception of renunciant identity. It is in the boundaries that identity is most evident. And it is in boundaries, at the rhetorical margins of the discourse of dominance, that the strategies of legitimation are also most evident. As Carol Newsom maintains,

The [woman at the margin] figures the irreducible difference that prevents any discourse from establishing itself unproblematically. That is to say, she is not simply the speech of actual women, but she is the symbolic figure of a variety of marginal discourses. She is the contradiction, the dissonance that forces a dominant discourse to articulate itself and at the same time threatens to

²⁹See especially Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Purity and Taboo* (London: Penguin, 1970).

subvert it.³⁰

In the *Vinaya*, I argue, *bhikkhunis* function to demarcate the outer limits of renunciant identity. In so doing, they also force "the dominant discourse to articulate itself." It is in the ambiguities, incongruities, and anomalies which pervade *Vinaya* discussions about *bhikkhunis* that the strategies of legitimation are revealed.

Concepts, Methods, and Contributions

In attempting to reveal strategies of legitimation, I treat the *Vinaya* as a literary document. I study narrative, not practice; story, not history. Though occasionally my discussions refer to literary characters as subjects (for example, "the Buddha institutes a rule"), these characters are always to be understood as literary productions, not as historical actors ("according to the text, the Buddha insti-

³⁰Carol Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1-9" (in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. by Peggy Day, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, pp. 142-160). The concept of boundaries as a strategy of legitimation in the discourse of patriarchy is also prominent in sociological studies of women in religion. For example, Santi Rozario, *Purity and Communal Boundaries: Women and Social Change in a Bangladeshi Village* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1992) concludes: "Bengali notions of honour, shame and purity are important not only to maintain a sexual hierarchy but to maintain group boundaries, status structures, distribution of power -- the overall structure of domination" (p. 179). See also Virginia Burrus, "Word and Flesh: The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity" (*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10 [1994]: 27-51). The construction of virgin sexuality in early Christian ascetic literary sources, Burrus maintains, "functions to create and defend new communal boundaries and to reassert and strengthen the gender hierarchy" (p. 51).

tutes a rule").

The strategies which legitimate the discourse of dominance in the *Vinaya* are textual strategies, not historical processes. They are undoubtedly the product of specific social conditions and struggles for hegemony, but at this stage of our knowledge those historical circumstances can only be guessed at, not known.³¹ Scholars do not know with any degree of certitude when the texts were composed, where they were composed, or by whom they were composed.³² This uncertainty means that issues of historicity, social context and

³¹This has not, however, prevented scholars from engaging in elaborate attempts to date the texts and locate their geographical origins. In fact, this has been the preoccupation of the vast majority of *Vinaya* scholars. The methods vary. Those scholars who can compare extant versions of the *Vinaya* in the many languages in which they have been preserved, seeking an original source in elements common to all versions. The scholarly studies are too numerous to cite (see Prebish, *Survey of Vinaya Literature*, pp. 127-141), but two classic studies stand out: W. Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa: On the Basis of its Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pali Versions* (Santiniketan: Sino-Indian Cultural Society, 1955) and Erich Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* (Rome: Is.M.E.O., 1956). For a critique of this method, see Gregory Schopen, "Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism: The Layman/Monk Distinction and the Doctrines of the Transference of Merit" (*Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 10 [1985]: 9-47), especially pp. 17-22.

³²For a concise statement on the extent of our ignorance and the problems with using the Pali *Vinaya* as a reliable source for reconstructing the early history of Buddhism, see Steven Collins, "Introduction" to Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life: According to the Texts of the Theravāda Tradition*, trans. by Claude Grangier and Steven Collins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. xii-xix. The problems with using the *Vinaya* as a "window" on the past are compounded by contradictory views conveyed by inscriptions and other texts. See the discussion in notes 3, 12 and 13 above.

authorship must be bracketed. The text must be interpreted either in terms of its own symbolic universe or in its impact on modern practice.

As we have seen, the *Vinaya* wields great power over female renunciants today. My study is designed to investigate the source of its authority. The categories of my analysis are thus explicitly drawn from the terms and concepts prevalent in the texts themselves. I am primarily interested in the world within the texts. The main body of my thesis consists of a detailed description and analysis of the language and imagery indigenous to the *Vinaya*.

I begin my thesis with the juxtaposition of paradoxical, seemingly contradictory, statements about the ordination of women in the Mahāpajāpatī story. How can the story simultaneously affirm women's capability to attain *nibbāna* (the soteriological goal of Buddhism, the quest for which is explicitly the rationale for the monastic system) yet describe their presence in the *sangha* as causing the premature decline of the renunciant lifestyle (*brahmacariya*) and the true teachings (*saddhamma*)? How can institutional subordination impede the decline? Why does the Buddha initially refuse to ordain Mahāpajāpatī, but then change his mind?

Chapter I sets up the problem, summarizing the story, describing the approaches taken by other scholars to interpret the story, and identifying anomalies and incongruities contained within the story. I conclude the chapter with my

assessment that the main point underlying the anomalies and seeming contradictions is the issue of identity--the question of what it means to be a Buddhist renunciant.

In Chapters II, III, and IV, I investigate the development of a particular vision of identity that pervades the *Vinaya*. I argue that the *Vinaya* notion of identity involves the embodiment of the Buddha's *bodhi*, his enlightenment. The *Vinaya* establishes an ideal person as well as an ideal community that acts, speaks, and thinks the characteristics of enlightenment.

These characteristics are introduced in the biography of the Buddha which opens the *Vinaya*, and which I discuss in Chapter II. This biography describes the Buddha contemplating his attainment of enlightenment on the night during which it occurred. He spends four more weeks in contemplation, changing locations each week. He encounters various supernatural beings and is convinced to teach human beings the path to attainment, proceeding to convert and ordain his first followers. He then gives his followers the mandate to spread out and teach his path and convert others into the *sangha*. In this biography the characteristics of enlightenment are both described and symbolically transferred from the person of the Buddha onto the *sangha*. Both the Buddha and his *sangha* are described as absolutely pure, perfectly separate from the secular world, and intrinsically superior to all beings immersed in that world. They are also both male. Though the

account details the origins of *bhikkhus*, male lay-followers and female lay-followers, no *bhikkhunīs* are mentioned. The model identity developed in this introductory narrative is a masculine one.

In the next two chapters I explore how the masculine model of identity is developed in two main categories of the *Vinaya*, the *Khandhakas*, which contain the rules and administrative procedures of the *sangha* as a corporate body, and the *Suttavibhaṅga*, which details the rules pertaining to individuals. Chapter III discusses how the purity of the ideal community is created, sustained, and protected in the *Khandhakas*. The maintenance of purity involves the systematic and pervasive exclusion of *bhikkhunīs* from the official business of the *sangha*: *bhikkhunīs* occupy a liminal position closely resembling outsiders or *bhikkhus* under temporary suspension for offenses they have committed. This liminal position is even more evident in the *Suttavibhaṅga*, which I discuss in Chapter IV. The rules for individual monastics reveal a strikingly different perspective on the location of impurity: for *bhikkhus*, impurity resides outside the boundaries of the *sangha* and the rules protect them from external defilement; for *bhikkhunīs*, impurity resides within themselves and the rules protect others from the spread of this internal defilement.

The model of identity is thus quite different for *bhikkhunīs* than it is for *bhikkhus*. There can be no doubt

that it is the *bhikkhus'* model that is normative in the worldview of the *Vinaya*. The purity, separation, and status of the ideal *bhikkhu* is identical with that of the ideal *sangha* and the Buddha as he is described in the *Vinaya* rendition of his biography. This model identity is also the guiding principle which dictates the structure of the *Vinaya* narrative, as I discuss in Chapter V.

Throughout the *Vinaya*, the purity, separation, and hierarchy which define the model of identity are depicted as very fragile. Strict rules and procedures for enforcement are mandated by this fragility. If purity is not maintained, if the boundaries are breached, decline will set in and inevitably corrupt the entire *sangha*. When this happens, truth (*saddhamma*) will no longer be accessible to human beings. In the narrative structure of the *Vinaya* as a whole, this decline is inevitable. In Chapter V, I examine the *Vinaya* as a story with a beginning--the Buddha's enlightenment--and an ending--the Buddha's death. Decline appears midway through this story, but gains momentum as the narrative moves towards its conclusion. The last text of the *Vinaya* before its final chapter is the account of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination. Therefore, I argue, *bhikkhunīs* are consistently associated with decline: their presence in the *sangha* threatens its purity, breaches its boundaries, and challenges its hierarchy. Women belong outside the gate of the *sangha*, not inside.

In the conclusion, I return to the story of Mahāpajāpatī,

interpreting it in light of the preceding analyses. The anomalies and incongruities of the story revolve around the same issues as the rest of the *Vinaya*: *Mahāpajāpatī* is presented as impure, as lacking physical, social, and emotional containment, and as challenging the Buddha's authority. As such, she embodies not the pure ideal of a Buddhist renunciant, but its antithesis. It is in opposition to her and all that she symbolizes that the discourse of the *Vinaya* is legitimated.

Thus, the main argument in my thesis is that the story of women's ordination is not about women at all. Rather, it is the product of a discourse which seeks to define renunciant identity in opposition to the impure, messy entanglements of householder life symbolized by women.

My argument and my analysis in this thesis are unique in the field of Buddhist studies, both among scholars who focus on women and among those who focus on *Vinaya*. The thesis makes four contributions to the field. First, it is the first full-length study of the story of women's ordination which as we have seen is of vital importance to today's women renunciants in the Theravāda tradition. Second, it is the first study of the Pali *Vinaya* to seriously consider the impact of gender on its categories, assumptions, and overall structure. The *Vinaya* continues to play a decisively authoritative role in Theravāda Buddhist monasticism. The implications of monks modelling themselves on a text that develops a renunciant

identity which explicitly excludes and delegitimizes women are profound. These implications are beyond the purview of my thesis, but my thesis could contribute to their exploration. Third, my thesis acts as a corrective to scholarship on women in Buddhism which, as we will see in the next chapter, assumes that the story is an accurate reflection of women's role in an early period of Buddhism's development. By demonstrating the consistency between the story and other narratives in the *Vinaya*, my thesis illustrates the constructed nature of the story. Fourth, my analysis of the strategies of legitimation employed by the *Vinaya* could provide the basis for a more nuanced investigation of the social history of Indian Buddhism that takes power and resistance into account. My thesis brackets issues of history and authorship, but there is no question that the texts derive from a Buddhist community that was unsympathetic to women's renunciation. There are other texts, however, which are much more sympathetic. For example, the *Therīgāthā* presents a very different perspective of women's renunciation, women's perspective.³³ The fact that the women who composed and preserved the *Therīgāthā* do not mention the *Vinaya* is significant. Perhaps they, like modern women renunciants, simply did not consider it relevant to their vocation. The *Vinaya* may place them outside the gates, but they know they are inside.

³³See Kathryn Blackstone, *Women in the Footsteps of the Buddha: Struggle for Liberation in the Therīgāthā* (Taiwan: Jin Luen, forthcoming).

CHAPTER I

The Problem: Anomalies in the Mahāpajāpatī Story

Cullavagga X, the Pali story of the Buddha's reluctant admission of women into his monastic system, is a striking example of a text that juxtaposes paradoxical, even contradictory perspectives on women. The story is the only textual justification of the ordination of women in Pali literature. It explains the origins of female monasticism. Because of the emphasis in Buddhist literature on renunciation as the most effective path to *nibbāna* (liberation from the bonds of rebirth), the story is essential for our understanding of textual presentations of women's religious practice and soteriological potential.

The story is thus pivotal to the study of Theravāda Buddhist female renunciation--textual, historical, and contemporary. The story is not, however, easy to understand. It reflects an irreducible ambivalence toward women's renunciation. Though the story acknowledges women's capacity to attain *nibbāna*, it also attributes to women's presence in the order a halving of the lifetime of the "true *dhamma*" (*sad-dhamma*, the Buddha's teachings which propel individuals to realization of *nibbāna*), and presents the Buddha as requiring

the formal subordination of the women's order to the men's in an attempt to minimize the damage their presence will bring.

In the story,¹ the Buddha's aunt and foster mother, Mahāpajāpatī, requests the ordination of women. The Buddha refuses three times. Along with a large number of her female friends and relatives, Mahāpajāpatī cuts her hair, dons the yellow robes of renunciation, and follows the Buddha to Vesālī. There, standing outside the gate of the town, travel-worn, dirty, and crying, Mahāpajāpatī informs Ānanda, the Buddha's personal *bhikkhu* attendant, of the Buddha's refusal. Ānanda petitions the Buddha on her behalf for the ordination of women. Again, the Buddha refuses three times. Ānanda then changes his approach and asks the Buddha if women could attain *nibbāna* if they were allowed entrance into the order. The Buddha acknowledges their capacity to attain all the levels of liberation, including *nibbāna*. Ānanda then reminds the Buddha of his debt to Mahāpajāpatī for mothering him after his own mother died shortly after his birth. The Buddha submits to Ānanda's reasoning, but puts forth the eight "weighty rules" (*garudhamma*) that Mahāpajāpatī and other women must accept as a condition of ordination: (1) that all *bhikkhunīs* (nuns) must pay homage to all *bhikkhus* (monks), regardless of seniority; (2) that *bhikkhunīs* must spend the rainy season retreat in

¹Hermann Oldenberg, ed. *The Vinaya Pitakam* Vol. II (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1964), pp. 253-256. Translated by I.B. Horner in *The Book of Discipline* Vol. V (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1949), pp. 352-356. See also, AN IV, 274-279.

close proximity to *bhikkhus*; (3) that *bhikkhunīs* must ascertain the dates of the bi-monthly ritual days from *bhikkhus*; (4) that *bhikkhunīs* must confess transgressions to *bhikkhus*; (5) that *bhikkhunīs* must be disciplined by both orders (the *bhikkhunī-sangha* and the *bhikkhu-sangha*); (6) that *bhikkhunīs* must seek ordination from both orders; (7) that *bhikkhunīs* cannot revile *bhikkhus*; (8) that *bhikkhunīs* cannot admonish *bhikkhus* for any reason, though *bhikkhus* can admonish *bhikkhunīs*.

Ānanda reports back to Mahāpajāpatī, asking her if she will accept these rules. She accepts them, comparing them to a garland of flowers to wear on her head. Ānanda returns to the Buddha, informing him of her acceptance. The Buddha then predicts that the lifetime of true *dhamma* will be halved from one thousand to five hundred years, explaining metaphorically how women's presence has contaminated the *dhamma* like robbers entering a household, like mildew attacking a field of rice, and like rust decimating a field of sugar-cane. Nevertheless, he explains, the eight rules are designed to control the damage, as a dyke controls the water in a reservoir.

The story contains within it a series of tensions or incongruities: women can attain *nibbāna*, yet somehow represent a threat to the *dhamma*; the Buddha admits women into the *sangha*, but their presence will cause irredeemable damage; the Buddha changes his mind after he has rejected Mahāpajāpatī's request; and, social subordination is presented as a solution

to a metaphysical threat.

The story thus encapsulates the problem that women's practice and soteriological potential has posed for Buddhists and scholars seeking to understand Buddhism. The inconsistent or paradoxical presentation of women is maintained in all the versions of the story still extant.² It seems clear, there-

²The story appears in the literature of nearly every school of Buddhism still extant, almost always in the Vinaya. Jan Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991), provides a thorough list of the texts in which this story is found, including several occurrences in Pali texts (AN IV, 278; *Milindapaṇṇa* IV, i, 55-61, and *Cullavagga* X), the Vinayas of the Dharmaguptaka school (preserved only in Chinese, T No. 1428, 22.923c9), the Mahīśāsaka (T No. 1421, 22. 186a14), and the Haimavata (*Vinaya-Mātrkā* (P'i-ni mu ching, T No. 1463, 24.818c4), the Sarvāstivāda *Madhyamāgama* (*Chung a-han ching*, T No. 26, 1. 607b9), and two texts of uncertain sectarian affiliation (*Ch'u-t'an-mi chi-kuo ching*, T No. 60, 1.857c29 and *Chung pen-ch'i ching*, T No. 196, 4.159b8).

To this list we can include the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins. For the story in Sanskrit, see C.M. Ridding and L. De La Vallee Poussin, "A Fragment of the Sanskrit Vinaya: *Bhikṣunīkarmavacana*" (*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 1 [1919]: 123-143) which is translated by Frances Wilson, "The Nun" (in Diana Paul, *Women in Buddhism* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, pp. 82-105). It also appears in the Mūlasarvāstivādin *Dulva*, preserved in Tibetan (11, f. 326b-338) and translated by W. Woodville Rockhill, *The Life of the Buddha* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., 1884), pp. 60-62.

Nattier has also missed a crucial appearance of the story in the Vinaya of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins, ed. by Gustav Roth, *Bhikṣunī-Vinaya: Including Bhikṣunī-Prakīrnaka of the Ārya-Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin* (Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1970), pp. 4-21, and translated by Edith Nolot, *Regles de Discipline des Nonnes Bouddhistes* (Paris: College de France Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1991), pp. 2-12. This omission in Nattier's work is serious: it leads her to construct a chronological scheme in which the story appears after the sectarian divisions in Buddhism. The existence of these texts raises serious questions about her chronology. As they appear in the Mahāsāṃghika branch, the story must be treated as pre-dating

fore, that the paradox or inconsistency is an intrinsic component of the story. To accommodate this similarity between the versions of the story, an interpretation would have to acknowledge the irreducibility of the paradoxical presentation of women. An adequate interpretation would have to treat the story as a unitary document despite its apparent internal contradiction.³

This is not, however, the approach taken by most scholars who have studied the story. Throughout the thesis, I seek to rectify this situation. The central question guiding my analysis is why women's ordination is problematic within the worldview of Buddhist renunciation as that worldview is expressed in the literature of the Pali Vinaya, the code of rules and regulations that pertain to the monastic system.

In this chapter, I establish the parameters of my investigation, demonstrating that the story of women's ordination, the "Mahāpajāpatī story", contains within it serious anomalies. I do not attempt to interpret the anoma-

the sectarian division. Granted that the story, as such, does not appear in the *Mahāsāṃghika-Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya*, the text still refers to it in "other sūtras", which Akira Hirakawa cites in *Monastic Discipline for the Buddhist Nuns: An English Translation of the Chinese Text of the Mahāsāṃghika-Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya* (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1982), pp. 47-48, n. 2.

³Even the commentator, Buddhaghosa, questions why the Buddha initially rejects Mahāpajāpatī's petition and when exactly the *saddhamma* will decline. *Samantapāsādikā*, translated from the Chinese by P.V. Bapat, *Shan-Chien-P'i-P'o-Sha: A Chinese Version by Saṅghabhadra of Samantapāsādikā* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1970), p. 534.

lies at this point, but to identify them. In so doing, I initiate the process of interpretation. Throughout the rest of the thesis, I examine how the presence of women in the *sangha* is consistently presented as problematic in *Vinaya* narratives. In the conclusion to the thesis, I return to the story of Mahāpajāpatī, interpreting it in light of the consistent presentation of *bhikkhunīs* throughout the *Vinaya*.

In the analysis that follows, I shall examine systematically the components of the story that demonstrate incongruities, comparing the Pali version with those preserved in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan and referring to relevant passages in Pali literature. I make no claim to be either flawless or exhaustive in my comparison, being limited to European language translations of the Chinese and Tibetan versions. Rather, I compare the Pali with other accounts to establish the pervasiveness and antiquity of the problem and to further substantiate tendencies I see developed in the Pali. Similarly, I refer to other passages in Pali literature to establish a prevailing pattern in textual representations of women. Some of the passages I discuss are treated in greater depth in the chapters that follow. I begin, however, with a discussion of the treatment of the Mahāpajāpatī story in scholarly studies.

Scholarship on the Story of Mahāpajāpatī

The story of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination has been a focal

point in almost all studies of women in Buddhism. Scholars have been intrigued by its ambiguous, even paradoxical presentation of women. They have tended, however, to focus on issues of doctrine or history in their interpretations, thereby privileging a single aspect of the story at the expense of others. Some scholars have used the story to highlight the Buddha's acknowledgement of women's soteriological capabilities, thereby establishing the doctrinal egalitarianism of the Buddha and his *sangha*. Others have focussed on the explicit discrimination against women in the eight rules and the implicit misogyny of the Buddha's prediction and similes of destruction to establish the institutional sexism of the "early" *sangha*.⁴

In my study of this scholarship I have identified three common trends: (1) the employment of a hypothetical degeneration chronology that defines egalitarian aspects of the

⁴In a recent article, Steven Collins cautions against the assumption that "early Buddhism" is that which is described in the Pali canon, or even that the Pali canon is necessarily the most ancient collection of Buddhist literature. Rather, he argues, the Pali canon ("a closed list of scriptures with a special and specific authority as the avowed historical record of the Buddha's teaching") is best understood as the product of a particular lineage of monks who compiled this closed list as a strategy of legitimation to demonstrate their superiority to other lineages. "On the Very Idea of the Pali Canon" (*Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15 [1990]: 89-126). I attempt to indicate my acknowledgement of Collins' critique by enclosing "early" in quotation marks whenever it reflects this assumption in scholarly works. It is clear, though, that the story of Mahāpajāpatī is, in fact, of great antiquity. The consistency between versions demonstrates its composition prior to sectarian divisions in Buddhism, which are indisputably early.

story as early while dismissing the rest as later interpolations; (2) a "progress chronology" which rejects the story as the product of an "early" patriarchal emphasis against which later Mahāyānists rebelled; and (3) a sociological model which explains how the Buddha modified his radical egalitarianism in response to external pressures of his patriarchal milieu.

Most scholars employ a theory of an internal chronology: the egalitarian presentation of women's liberative potential forms the core of the account (instituted by the Buddha); later interpolations are responsible for the Buddha's hesitancy, his prediction of the decline of the *dhamma*, the similes of contamination, and the institutional subordination underlying the eight rules. This theory was initiated, it seems, by I.B. Horner in her seminal work, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism*.⁵ In conformity with the emphasis on "primitive Buddhism" (= Pali texts) and the "historical Buddha" thought to be evident therein which was current during her training in the early decades of the Pali Text Society,⁶ Horner sought to

⁵I.B. Horner, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism: Laywomen and Almswomen* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975 [repr. of London, 1930]).

⁶For a discussion of this period see Philip Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Though he critiques the assumptions of Victorian scholars of Buddhism, Almond, himself, has been criticized for his unstated assumptions. See the review article by Jonathan Silk, "The Victorian Creation of Buddhism" (*Journal of Indian Philosophy* 22 [1994]: 171-196). For an interesting survey of the effect of these Victorian assumptions on female buddhologists of that time, see Jonathan Walters, "A Voice from the Silence: The Buddha's Mother's Story" (*History of Religions* 33 [1994]: 358-379), pp. 358-359 and 366-367.

distinguish between the original utterances of the Buddha and the additions of monk-editors which crept into the texts over time. In her view, the Buddha was a social reformer, determined to release the "clutches" of Brahmanism, including its emphasis on ritual, caste, and the oppression of women.⁷ He never claimed that women could not attain *nibbāna*,⁸ and never hesitated to teach women.⁹ Horner proposes that "monks edited the sayings attributed to Gotama [the Buddha], and they would naturally try to minimise the importance which he gave to women."¹⁰ The product of the oral preservation of the texts, this "monk-factor" helps us understand the discrepancy between different presentations of women in the texts: "It partially explains the views, more favourable to monkdom than to lay-life, more favourable to men than to women, which are usually ascribed to Gotama."¹¹

Other scholars have followed Horner's insistence on the original egalitarianism of the Buddha and his order and attributed more discriminatory passages in the literature to Horner's "monk-factor". For example, following Horner and an influential article by Nancy Falk,¹² Nancy Schuster Barnes

⁷Horner, *Women*, pp. 116-117.

⁸Ibid, p. 103.

⁹Ibid, p. 115.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 105. See also p. 109.

¹¹Ibid, p. xx-xxi.

¹²Nancy Falk, "The Case of the Vanishing Nuns".

thinks the eight rules resulted from the monks' desire to reserve for themselves the permanent control and leadership of the *sangha*, though they could do nothing about the existing institution of nuns.¹³

The assumption underlying the chronological explanation is that doctrinal egalitarianism logically precedes discrimination. If discrimination had originated first, there would have been no opportunity for egalitarianism to develop. None of these scholars, however, justifies this relative chronology by comparing other sources (including Chinese or Sanskrit manuscripts or inscriptional evidence) with the Pali texts to establish the antiquity of passages they consider relatively early, or of those they dismiss as later developments.

As I shall explain below, the versions of the story still extant in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan, representing diverse schools and historical periods, show surprisingly few differ-

¹³Nancy Schuster Barnes, "Buddhism" (in *Women in Religion*, ed. by Arvind Sharma, Albany: State University of New York, 1987, pp. 105-133), pp. 107-108. For a similar perspective, see also Cornelia Dimmitt Church, "Temptress, Housewife, Nun: Women's Role in Early Buddhism" (*Anima* 1 [1975]: 52-58), p. 54; Rita Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy* (Albany: State University of New York, 1993), pp. 34-38; Kajiyama Yuichi, "Women in Buddhism" (*Eastern Buddhist* n.s. 15 [1982]: 53-70), pp. 59-61; and especially Tessa Bartholomeusz, *Women Under the Bo Tree* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1991), pp. 55-61. Bartholomeusz argues that the eight special rules in particular indicate interpolation because they are (a) duplicated, overturned, or contradicted by other texts; and (b) inconsistently tacked on at the end of *Cullavagga* instead of preceding the *bhikkhuni-vibhanga* as would be a more logical placement.

ences from the Pali.¹⁴ If the story (or parts thereof) is indeed the product of "later interpolation", this process appears to have happened early in the history of Buddhist textual composition, prior to the first split in the *sangha* between the Mahāsāṃghikas and the Sthaviras, c. 340 BCE.¹⁵

A second group of scholars agrees that the story was the product of a relatively early period of Buddhist textual composition, but, in their developmental pattern, "early" Buddhism was not egalitarian but was actively misogynist.

Diana Paul's *Women in Buddhism* stands out as the pre-eminent example.¹⁶ In Paul's work, the "early" Pali literature is thoroughly imbued with an attitude of repugnance and antipathy towards women. Women symbolize the realm of *samsāra*, the realm of rebirth, bondage, death, and suffering, and must, therefore, be vanquished, both on a personal level and on a cosmic level.¹⁷ The Pali materials develop a dual portrait of women, on the one hand focusing on women's sexuality "as sensual, destructive, and sometimes bestial," and on the other hand focusing on motherhood as sorrowful and imbued

¹⁴See the references above, n. 2.

¹⁵I follow the dating in Jan Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, p. 31.

¹⁶Diana Paul, *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in the Mahāyāna Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

¹⁷*Ibid*, p. 5-6.

with suffering.¹⁸ In contrast, the Mahāyāna texts tend to be more favourable towards women, though they too contain "remnants" of the earlier misogyny.¹⁹

In other words, Paul and scholars following her lead reverse the direction of the chronology initiated by I.B. Horner: instead of positing an original egalitarianism tainted by later generations of monk-editors, Paul sees a gradual progression in Buddhist history from inherent sexism, even misogyny, to the development of egalitarianism with the doctrines of Mahāyāna.

The theory has an advantage over the Horner chronology insofar as it takes account of the probable early dating of

¹⁸Ibid, p. 307.

¹⁹Ibid, pp. 8-10. Paul attributes the misogyny of "early" Buddhist texts to the Indian context in which they developed. It was only when Mahāyāna took root in China that truly egalitarian doctrines could flourish and develop further. See, in particular, Part III (pp. 245-302) which Paul presents as the exaltation of the feminine in female deities such as Kuan Yin (p. 307).

Following Paul's lead, Janice Willis, "Nuns and Benefactresses: The Role of Women in the Development of Buddhism" (in *Women, Religion, and Social Change*, ed. by Y. Haddad and E. Findly, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985, pp. 59-85) describes a gradual historical progression from Pali to Mahāyāna texts in the positive portrayals of women. For a similar perspective, see Karen Lang, "Lord Death's Snare: Gender-related Imagery in the Theragāthā and the Therīgāthā" (*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2 [1986]:63-79), p. 78.

Depending on these studies, Rita Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, develops this trend even further, arguing that full flowering of an incipient egalitarianism had to await the development of Vajrayāna Buddhism (p. 57 and 114). However, Gross departs from Paul's model in acknowledging positive portrayals of women in "early" Pali materials such as the *Therīgāthā*.

the text and accepts the story as a unified document. However, it also has disadvantages. This type of explanation is based on the problematic assumption that Pali literature is both early and monolithic. Like the degeneration chronology put forth by Horner, the "progress chronology" fails to incorporate the historical evidence we have of women's religious practice during various periods of the development of Buddhism. For example, Rita Gross' recent reformulation of the progress chronology neglects inscriptional evidence of a decline in women's activities with the rise of Mahāyāna²⁰ and relies on a simplistic reading of Mahāyāna texts which ignores chronological strata within Mahāyāna literature itself. In Paul Harrison's analysis, the earliest Mahāyāna texts translated into Chinese (c. 100 CE) actually circumscribe women's role more than do Pali texts.²¹

The final trend in scholarship, which explains tensions in the story as resulting from the influence of the patriarchal social milieu, also has advantages and disadvantages. This trend pervades studies of women in Buddhism and comprises a

²⁰See, for example, Gregory Schopen's startling discovery that while women appear very frequently in inscriptions clearly predating the rise of Mahāyāna as teachers, specialists in the texts, and influential donors, in Mahāyāna inscriptions, mention of women declines significantly. "On Monks, Nuns and 'Vulgar' Practices: The Introduction of the Image Cult into Indian Buddhism" (*Artibus Asiae* 49 [1988-89]: 153-168), p. 165.

²¹Paul Harrison, "Who Gets to Ride in the Great Vehicle? Self-Image and Identity Among the Followers of the Early Mahāyāna" (*Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 10 [1987]:67-89), p. 77.

component of all the studies I have discussed thus far; however, I think it warrants separate treatment since many scholars employ it as their sole explanatory model. This explanation tends to be favoured by scholars working from within the Buddhist tradition as it honours the texts as the words of the Buddha while simultaneously discrediting those portrayals of women considered problematic by today's standards.²²

Like the "degeneration chronology", this explanatory model was introduced (or, at least, first developed) by I.B. Horner in *Women Under Primitive Buddhism*. In explaining the Buddha's hesitation and his promulgation of the eight rules, Horner relies first on the chronological model, but she concedes that other explanations are also plausible. Though she firmly believes the Buddha to have been a social reformer, she acknowledges that he would have had difficulty contemplating full equality for women given the patriarchal milieu in which he was raised and in which he sought to promote his new social vision. The Buddha's heart was in the right place, but

²²Interestingly, Tessa Bartholomeusz discovered a distinction between the degree to which Sri Lankan women and men attribute the eight rules to the Buddha. While the majority of monks accept the story as factual, the majority of lay nuns Bartholomeusz interviewed do not think the Buddha could have been capable of such overt discrimination. *Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 137.

he faltered at the prospect of true egalitarianism.²³ Other scholars follow her lead, though they shift the focus slightly: for example, the Buddha feared alienating his supporting community by removing marriageable women, or by straining the *sangha*'s credibility with too high a profile for women.²⁴

Scholars writing from within the tradition extend this explanation even further, attempting to reconcile the Buddha's apparent antipathy towards Mahāpajāpatī's request with statements attributed to him that are more sympathetic towards women. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh attributes the Buddha's initial hesitancy to his compassion: he wanted to protect Mahāpajāpatī from the hardship of renunciation; he doubted the sincerity of the "dancing girls" he grew up with in the Sakyan clan; or, he was concerned about a shortage of Sakyan women to perpetuate the clan.²⁵ In Kabilsingh's analysis, the eight rules are an outgrowth of his compassion. They are the Buddha's way of ensuring women's dedication and protecting them from a hasty or premature decision to pursue a difficult vocation.

²³Alternately, he may have been concerned about the sexual temptation posed by close proximity between monks and nuns. Horner, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism*, pp. 109-112.

²⁴See, for example, Rita Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, p. 35-36; Susan Murcott, *The First Buddhist Women: Translations and Commentary on the Therīgāthā* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1991), p. 196; Janice Willis, "Nuns and Benefactresses"; Cornelia Church, "Tempress, Housewife, Nun".

²⁵Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, *A Comparative Study of Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha* (Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia, 1984), p. 24.

Sangharakshita takes a different approach, though it stems from a similar motivation. In Sangharakshita's estimation, the Buddha is responding to his intimate knowledge of Mahāpajāpatī. She evidently had problems with excessive pridefulness and needed to learn humility: her "self-ordination" represents a display of emotional blackmail and self-centered pride. The eight rules are the Buddha's way of encouraging the discipline and humility he sees as more appropriate to renunciants.²⁶

These explanations are clearly apologetic: they seek to translate a passage problematic to contemporary sensibilities into terms with which we can be sympathetic. Implicitly, they reject the explanation of either of the chronological theories. The texts are accepted as accurate representations of the Buddha's words and intentions. Mohan Wijayaratna is the only scholar I am aware of who provides an explicit argument against the chronological explanation. In his analysis, the monk-editors who preserved the Buddha's words cannot be considered misogynist as they would not have affirmed women's capacity to attain *nibbāna*. Instead, the Buddha predicted the decline of the *dhmma* as a way of encouraging women to overcome their "feminine mental tendencies" (*habitudes*

²⁶Sangharakshita, *The Buddha's Victory* (Glasgow: Windhorse Publications, 1991), pp. 52-57. As part of his analysis, Sangharakshita develops William Blake's notion of the "Female Will", an inherently feminine desire to dominate men. Mahāpajāpatī had to prove to the Buddha her capacity to overcome her "Female Will" before he would agree to ordain her.

mentales [vāsanā] feminines). The prediction and the similes of destruction constitute a warning: if women do not control their tempting of monks and the community starts to falter, women will be held responsible. The eight rules represent the Buddha's insistence that women conform to the existing social norms subordinating women to men.²⁷

These three scholarly models -- the degeneration chronology, the progress chronology, and the sociological explanation -- make a significant contribution to our understanding of the ambiguity in the story, though none is without its drawbacks.²⁸ They all represent attempts to understand the

²⁷Mohan Wijayaratna, *Les Moniales Bouddhistes: Naissance et Développement du Monachisme Féminin* (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1991), pp. 29-30. See also Appendix 1 in his *Buddhist Monastic Life: According to the Texts of the Theravāda Tradition* (trans. by Claude Grangier and Steven Collins, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 158-163.

²⁸I have omitted Nancy Falk's influential article, "The Case of the Vanishing Nuns", from my survey as it does not fit into the categories I have constructed. The article represents by far the most nuanced study of the historical effects of the ambiguity which pervades Pali literature. Falk is one of the very few scholars studying women in Buddhism who has addressed the historical evidence (inscriptional and accounts of the Chinese pilgrims). In her view, the ambiguity over nun's role in Buddhist literature derives from Buddhism's attempt to reconcile two conflicting paradigms of sexual differentiation: one deriving from *karma* (the theory that we are all the products of our past desires); and the other from *dharma* (the vision of a social order in which we all have our "place" -- a combination of inherent nature and social role). In the former paradigm, women, like men, can overcome the detrimental effects of their past, hence the Buddha's acceptance of women's liberative potential. In the latter paradigm, women have a metaphysical power which, if not properly channelled by a superior male, can become dangerous, hence the subordination required of nuns in the *garudhamma* (pp. 220-222).

paradox contained within the story of Mahāpajāpatī's request for ordination. The degeneration chronology explains it by referring to the degeneration of enlightened egalitarianism which found its way into the texts via the process of preservation; the progress chronology proceeds through theories of religious evolution; and the sociological model functions by attempting to find coherence in the Buddha's decisions. The strength of the degeneration chronology is in its explicit recognition of the paradox and its acknowledgement of issues of textual transmission. Its weakness in ignoring historical evidence, however, is very serious. Likewise, the progress chronology has strength in its acceptance of the text as a unified document. It is marred, however, by an over-generalization of textual tendencies, by a reification of "the tradition", and by historical inaccuracies. Finally, the sociological approach accepts the text as coherent and acknowledges the social context of Buddhism, but strains our credibility with its insistence on the historical Buddha as the source of all texts and does not succeed in addressing the feminist critique of Buddhist sexism.²⁹

²⁹Note the assumption in Kabil Singh, Sangharakshita, and Wijayaratna that women's "nature" is inherently problematic. In each of their analyses, women, more than men, require especially rigorous guidelines to conform with an ideal Buddhist humility. Rita Gross is undoubtedly one of the most influential critics of Buddhist sexism, past and present. Her book, *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, represents an articulate critique of assumptions like this and presents the most thorough attempt to date to reform Buddhism to address the feminist critique of patriarchy and androcentrism contained in Buddhist texts and perpetuated by Buddhist institutions.

Perhaps the greatest drawback of these models is their failure to treat the story of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination as a story. Almost all scholars studying the text treat it either as history or as doctrine. They ignore its narrative attributes and think of the characters in the story as historical figures.

In a recent article, Alan Sponberg rectifies this situation, introducing a new approach to the problem of conflicting presentations of women. He argues that this should not be understood as "a simple inconsistent ambivalence", but rather as a "rich multivocality." The diverging views in the texts represent a "multiplicity of voices, each expressing a different set of concerns current among members of the early community."³⁰ In his analysis, the story is a "document of reconciliation", in which two conflicting sets of concerns (soteriological inclusiveness and institutional androcentrism) are validated and reconciled.³¹ The story as it currently exists is a compromise necessitated by the dilemma posed by Buddhism's acceptance of women into the monastic order. Buddhism has no qualms about women's soteriological potential, but the presence of women in the order initiates administrative difficulties within the *sangha*

³⁰Alan Sponberg, "Attitudes toward Women and the Feminine in Early Buddhism" (in *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, ed. by Jose Cabazon, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, pp. 3-36), pp. 3-4.

³¹Ibid, pp. 15-16.

and social difficulties within the supporting community.

Sponberg sees the story as a narrative solution to the problem:

In the story, each of the contending factions or interest groups is given a traditionally respected voice, with Sākyamuni expressing both the concern of the conservative and socially sensitive majority and also the spirit of the wary (even reluctant) compromise and reconciliation that eventually emerged.³²

Mahāpajāpatī, as a traditional figure commanding a great deal of respect, is an appropriate character to represent women's capabilities. The character of Ānanda, as the Buddha's close attendant known for his affinity to women, represents the "complex process of mediation that had [to] go on between the various factions."³³

This analysis represents a tremendous advance in the interpretation of the story. It not only accommodates the tension maintained in the story, but it also provides a plausible historical explanation that recognizes a multiplicity of concerns operative at the same time within a religious tradition.³⁴ In Sponberg's analysis, the story represents a

³²Ibid, p. 16.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Unfortunately, Sponberg is not consistent in accepting a simultaneous multiplicity of voices underlying the texts. In the course of his survey of "early Buddhism" (= Pali texts), he identifies three characteristic attitudes -- soteriological inclusiveness, institutional androcentrism, and ascetic misogyny. In his analysis of which texts fit into these categories, he re-introduces the historical assumptions of the degeneration chronology, treating soteriological inclusiveness as historically and doctrinally prior to the other

response to historical circumstances (the dilemma posed by the existence of nuns), not a description of actual events. In short, his approach treats the text as a narrative, as a literary construction that serves pragmatic purposes. History can be reconstructed on the basis of the account not by simplistically accepting the story as fact but by deciphering the vested interests portrayed in the story and analyzing the strategies by which its authors manipulated those interests in the interactions of representative characters.

My approach to the story is indebted to Sponberg. I treat the story as story, not as history or as doctrine. Like Sponberg, I am interested in understanding the apparent ambiguity in the story's presentation of women. Unlike Sponberg's work, however, my study is confined to the narrative attributes of the story. This does not mean I am not interested in the historical circumstances in which the story was produced. Rather, I think the project of historical reconstruction can proceed only after a careful study of the texts has been conducted and must accommodate the historical evidence we have. It is a large project, too large for my dissertation. Instead, I focus exclusively on the literary sources at my disposal.

My approach, therefore, is literary. I employ in a general way the categories and assumptions specific to

attitudes (p. 8 and 13), and dismissing misogynist statements as "later interpolations" (p. 24), though, as he admits, both appear in the *Nikāya* and *Agama* literature.

literary criticism. I do not follow a particular school of literary criticism, but use general categories such as plot, characterization, narrative tension, climax, and overall configuration to guide my study of the story and its relationship to other narratives in the Pāli Vinaya. This literary approach has the advantage of enabling us to understand the story's synthesis of what appear to be contradictory statements and attitudes towards women. It also provides us with a means of understanding the story without resorting to hypothetical chronologies and a speculative historical milieu. In this approach, the internal organization, plot, character development, and style of discourse of a narrative furnish the basis for interpretation. The approach honours the unity and integrity of the text and permits a comparison with the literary conventions and narrative emphases of related stories. The literary features of a particular narrative thus provide a means of understanding the narrative and its textual context.³⁵

Before we can begin to interpret the story and understand the ambiguity we must first identify the precise issues on which the ambiguity centres and the narrative features which establish it. It is to this task that we now turn.

³⁵In this general use of literary critical categories, I follow the recent trend in biblical studies. For a discussion of this trend, see Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 19-34, especially pp. 33-34.

Anomalies in the Mahāpajāpatī Story

The Mahāpajāpatī story contains serious incongruities that produce its ambiguity. In my analysis I have identified six: (1) Ānanda and Mahāpajāpatī are characterized differently in the story than they are in other Pali sources; (2) Mahāpajāpatī's ordination varies significantly from all other ordinations described in the *Vinaya* and other Pali literature; (3) the institution of the eight rules (*garudhamma*) required for her ordination deviate from the typical format for instituting new rules; (4) this story presents the only occurrence of the Buddha changing his mind after he has refused a request three times; (5) the decline of *saddhamma* predicted in the story is left unexplained; (6) and, the story is placed at the end of the *Vinaya* even though *bhikkhunīs* appear throughout the texts that precede it.

As I have already mentioned, the ambiguous presentation of women apparently developed in a relatively early period of the development of Buddhist texts. The story of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination appears in the literature of almost every school of Buddhism, usually in the *Vinaya*.³⁶ There is a very

³⁶See the references in n. 6 above. In my research, I have consulted numerous summaries from Chinese accounts in my secondary sources (cited where appropriate) and four complete versions: the Pali, a Sanskrit fragment from the *Vinaya* of the Mūlasarvastivādins (edited by C.M. Ridding and L.De La Vallee Poussin and translated by Frances Wilson), a translation from the Tibetan Mūlasarvastivādin *Vinaya* by W. Rockhill, and the Prakrit version in the Ārya-Mahāsaṅghika-Lokottaravādin *Vinaya* (edited by Gustav Roth and translated by Edith Nolot).

high degree of consistency between different versions: the characters and events are basically uniform, and the prediction, specialized rules, and similes of destruction are prominent features of each. These elements of the story, in conjunction with the story's odd placement at the end of the *Cullavagga*, indicate that women's ordination posed a conceptual problem for the authors or redactors of *Vinaya* literature. Somehow, women do not fit the model of Buddhist renunciation that is developed throughout that literature, though all *Vinayas* acknowledge the existence of *bhikkhunīs* and the role of Mahāpajāpatī in instituting the *bhikkhunī-sangha*.

The character of Mahāpajāpatī is present in all accounts. As Alan Sponberg maintains, she is an appropriate figure to represent the interests of the *bhikkhunī-sangha*.³⁷ She was the Buddha's aunt who, according to legend, gave her own son to other women so that she could nurse the Buddha after his own mother died.³⁸ Her mothering of the Buddha established the debt referred to in the story. It also placed her in a position of authority and respect vis-à-vis the Buddha: throughout Buddhist literature, *bhikkhus* and laymen are consistently required to honour their mothers.³⁹

³⁷Alan Sponberg, "Attitudes toward Women", p. 16.

³⁸G.P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, Vols I and II (London: Pali Text Society), s.v. "Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī", p. 522.

³⁹I.B. Horner devotes a whole chapter of her *Women Under Primitive Buddhism* to mothers (Chapter I). The respect for mothers is pan-Indian; it was generally thought that children

Mahāpajāpatī is the only female character portrayed in Pali literature who had both authority and an emotional connection to the Buddha. The Buddha's former wife, Yasodharā, is another possibility, but wives do not command the same kind of respect in Buddhist literature as mothers. In fact, wives are often presented as obstacles to a man's decision to renounce and as enticements luring a *bhikkhu* back to the lifestyle he has renounced.⁴⁰ Doctrinally, the symbol of mother as selflessly compassionate is more compatible with the *dhamma* than the symbol of wife with its associations of sexuality, progeny, and householding responsibilities. Wives symbolize all that ascetics renounce. In any case, the character of Yasodharā is virtually ignored in Pali literature.⁴¹

owe a tremendous debt to their mothers, one that is impossible to repay. In one Pali text (AN I, 61), the only way of repayment envisaged is to teach the *dhamma* (pp. 10-11).

⁴⁰See Chapter III in Horner. Throughout the *Vinaya*, wives present a consistent sexual temptation for *bhikkhus*. For example, the first *Parājika* offence, sexual intercourse, is prompted because of Sudinna's intercourse with his former wife (*Suttavibhaṅga* I 5: 1-11).

⁴¹She is attributed with no verses in the *Therīgāthā*, though she does appear in the *Therī-apadāna* which Walters argues are literal continuations of the *Therīgāthā* ("Voice from the Silence", p. 365). In the single reference to her in the *Vinaya*, she appears embittered over the Buddha's abandonment of her and her new-born son, Rāhula. In the *Vinaya* account of the Buddha's first return to Kapilavatthu since his renunciation (*Mahāvagga* I 54.1-3), Yasodharā does not even go to see her former husband, but instead sends Rāhula to him to claim his "inheritance". The Buddha responds by ordaining him. Though the *Therī-apadāna* presents Yasodharā as choosing the path of renunciation for herself, her apparent antipathy towards her former husband marks her as an inappropriate

Throughout Pali literature, Mahāpajāpatī is presented with considerable respect. In the Buddha's famous list of his most eminent disciples (AN I 14), he names Mahāpajāpatī as the foremost *bhikkhuni* in experience. The Buddha tends her personally when she is ill, and subsequently modifies his prohibition for *bhikkhus* to preach *dhamma* in *bhikkhuni*-residences (*Pācittiya* XXII). In the *Therī-apadāna*, Mahāpajāpatī is presented as a leader of women who parallels the Buddha's leadership of men.⁴²

Thus, Mahāpajāpatī is quite powerful as a literary character.⁴³ In the story, her strength and autonomy are clearly emphasised. She approaches the Buddha as a leader of women. Then, after he has rejected her plea, she acts to ordain herself and her followers. In shaving her head and donning the yellow robes, she assumes the guise of a Buddhist renunciant. Finally, in walking to Vesālī at the head of her

literary character to represent women's renunciation. Mary Lilley, ed. *The Apadāna of the Khuddaka Nikāya*, Part II (London: Pali Text Society, 1927), no. 30, pp. 592-596. For a comparison of Yasodharā (and other wives of the Buddha) in the literature of various schools, see Andre Bareau, "Un Personage Bien Mystérieux: L'Espouse du Buddha" (in *Indological and Buddhist Studies: Volume in Honour of Professor J.W. de Jong on his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. by L.A. Hercus et al. Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, 1982, pp. 31-59).

⁴²See Jonathan Walters, "Voice from the Silence" and my discussion below.

⁴³She is not, however, without ambiguity. Though the Buddha deems her "chief of those with experience" (AN I 25), a passage in the *Majjhima Nikāya* has her presenting the Buddha with an inappropriate gift of elaborate robes, and Ānanda attempting intervention when the Buddha declines her gift (MN III 253f).

five hundred companions, she parallels the Buddha, who also walks at the head of his five hundred.

Here, though, Mahāpajāpatī's autonomy ends. She may have the authority to approach the Buddha and the independence to act on her own, but she is still prohibited from entering the gate of the *vihāra*. Her power is clear in the story, but it is insufficient to gain women admission into the *sangha*. Moreover, the eight rules function to effectively terminate Mahāpajāpatī's authority and to extinguish any hope of women obtaining a similar authority within the *sangha*. There is incongruity, therefore, in the story's dual emphasis on the personal power of Mahāpajāpatī and the abdication of that power as a requisite for ordination.

This incongruity is also present in the mediation of Ānanda, which is consistent in all accounts of the story. Mahāpajāpatī is presented as the leader of women who represents their desire for ordination, but it is to Ānanda's petition, not Mahāpajāpatī's, that the Buddha finally accedes.

Like Mahāpajāpatī, the character of Ānanda is well suited to its role in the text. Throughout Pali literature, Ānanda is known as the Buddha's trusted attendant who frequently mediates the Buddha's interactions with both the laity and fellow monastics: Ānanda presents the concerns of others to the Buddha; uses his own discretion to decide who should see the Buddha and when they can see him; and is frequently

delegated by the Buddha to lecture in his place.⁴⁴ Ānanda's intermediary role in the story is thus consistent with his portrayal throughout Pali literature.

Ānanda is also well-known for his sympathy with, and affinity to, women.⁴⁵ He is presented as preaching to women as a matter of course, and questioning discrimination against women. He asks the Buddha why women cannot act as judges in a court, embark on business, or understand the essence of a deed (*kamm' ojan*).⁴⁶ In the narrative of the first council (*Cullavagga XI*), Ānanda is described as allowing women to view the body of the Buddha before men are allowed to do so.⁴⁷

⁴⁴For a thorough study of the character of Ānanda in Pali sources, see Michael Freedman, *The Characterization of Ānanda in the Pāli Canon of the Theravāda: A Hagiographical Study* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, 1977). On Ānanda's role as intermediary, see, e.g., pp. 27-29 pp. 38-39, p. 273, p. 441, and throughout.

⁴⁵For a discussion and textual references, see Horner, pp. 295-300. This association between Ānanda and women extends beyond the texts into historical practice. Fa-Hian, who journeyed from China to India from 399 to 413 CE in search of more authentic *Vinaya* texts, records in his diary the practice of *bhikkhunis* honouring a *stupa* to Ānanda, "because it was Ānanda who requested the lord of the world to let women take orders." *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, trans. by Samuel Beal (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981 [repr. of London, 1884]), p. xxxix.

⁴⁶AN II. 80. The Buddha's answer presents a stark contrast with Ānanda's evident concern: "Womenfolk are uncontrolled, Ānanda. Womenfolk are envious, Ānanda. Womenfolk are greedy, Ānanda. Womenfolk are weak in wisdom, Ānanda."

⁴⁷Actually, Ānanda is reprimanded for this action and for promoting women's ordination in the first council account (*Cullavagga XI 1.10*). Ānanda's privileging of women at the Buddha's funeral does not appear in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* of the *Digha Nikāya*. I discuss the first council and the

Ānanda is thus a logical figure to present Mahāpajāpatī's request to the Buddha and to convey the Buddha's terms of agreement to Mahāpajāpatī. However, the description of Ānanda arguing with the Buddha's decision to reject Mahāpajāpatī's request is not consistent with his characterization in other sources.

As the Buddha's personal attendant, Ānanda is, like Mahāpajāpatī, a figure of great authority. He alone of the foremost *bhikkhus* listed in the *Anguttara Nikāya* is attributed with more than one praiseworthy characteristic. In the list, Ānanda is praised for five qualities: his wide knowledge, his memory, his good behaviour, his firmness, and his service to the Buddha. Ānanda uses his authority to protect the Buddha from disruptive meetings with supplicants and to preserve the Buddha's contemplation.⁴⁸ But, according to Horner, Ānanda's persuasion of the Buddha represents the only incident in Pali literature of the Buddha changing his mind after he has refused a request three times.⁴⁹ In our story, the Buddha had

ambiguous presentation of Ānanda below, pp. 216-236.

⁴⁸For example, Ānanda refuses to allow Subhadda to see the Buddha while he was lying on his deathbed (DN II 150). In this case, the Buddha overturns Ānanda's decision. See also *Parajika* III (1.1-4) where Ānanda knows of *bhikkhus* arranging to have themselves killed, but refrains from disturbing the Buddha's contemplation until he returns from his retreat.

⁴⁹Horner, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism*, p. 105. The Buddha does change his mind on occasion, but not after he has refused three times. See, for example, the famous story of the Buddha reversing his decision not to teach the *dhamma* when he is requested by Brahma Sahampati (*Mahāvagga* I 5.1-13). Though he refuses the first two requests, on the third, he

definitively refused the request twice, first to Mahāpajāpatī, then to Ānanda. Ānanda's persistence represents a great departure from his typical obedience of the Buddha and respect for his wishes.

Thus, like Mahāpajāpatī, Ānanda is presented consistently in the literature as an authoritative character who is known for his close personal ties with the Buddha (he is not only the Buddha's favourite attendant but also the Buddha's cousin).⁵⁰ Yet, in our story his role is incongruous with his presentation in other sources: he argues against the Buddha and effects the ordination of women.

Ānanda's persistence in the story is thus quite anomalous.⁵¹ Other textual sources recognize this anomaly. In accounts of the first council, the meeting of the foremost of *bhikkhus* after the Buddha's death, Ānanda is reprimanded for

concedes that some people are able to benefit from the *dhamma*.

⁵⁰Malalasekera, p. 249.

⁵¹The Buddha's role in this episode is also anomalous. Here, Ānanda convinces the Buddha by asking a series of questions which lead naturally to the conclusion that women should be allowed into the *sangha*. Throughout Buddhist literature, it is more often the Buddha who employs this technique, usually to convert a sceptic to the veracity of *dhamma*. For a discussion of this and other rhetorical strategies used throughout Pali *suttas*, see Joy Manne, "Categories of Sutta in the Pāli Nikāyas and their Implications for our Appreciation of the Buddhist Teaching and Literature" (*Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15 [1990]: 29-87).

intervening on behalf of Mahāpajāpatī.⁵² Ānanda is a well-respected figure whose authority is clearly acknowledged, but his role in the story is marked by incongruity.

Thus we see consistency in the incongruous characterization of Mahāpajāpatī and Ānanda in the story. Both figures are known in other sources for their close ties with the Buddha and their personal authority. Yet the way they exercise that authority in the story is problematic. This is perhaps most evident in Mahāpajāpatī's decision to "ordain" herself and her followers in clear disobedience of the Buddha's denial of her request. This "self-ordination" appears to be unique in Buddhist literature. Instead, in other cases where an individual's desire for ordination is thwarted, the Buddha intervenes to modify rules in order that ordination can take place.⁵³

Mahāpajāpatī's "true" ordination by the Buddha is also anomalous. As the sections of *Cullavagga X* which follow the

⁵²*Cullavagga XI*. Actually, as we shall see below in our study of the first council (Chapter V), Ānanda's role in the first council is also anomalous. Though he is responsible for remembering and reciting the Buddha's lectures accurately, he is the only non-*arahant* accepted in the convention, he is the only *bhikkhu* reprimanded for wrong-doing, and he is the only *bhikkhu* presented in the text as interacting with the laity after the council (significantly, these lay-folk are women). Michael Freedman's dissertation, "The Characterization of Ānanda in the Pali Canon", records similar anomalies with the character of Ānanda throughout the Pali canon.

⁵³In *Mahāvagga I* 28.1-3, a *brahman* is refused ordination by *bhikkhus*. As a result, he becomes ill, and the Buddha institutes a new ordination procedure to accommodate his ordination.

story indicate, the fact that she was not ordained according to the "*ehi bhikkhu(nī)*" formula in person by the Buddha, or by the formal procedure instituted in the sixth *garudhamma* (that *bhikkhunīs* are to be ordained by both orders), causes serious problems. *Bhikkhunīs* question the legitimacy of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination, but, as the Buddha informs Ānanda, her acceptance of the eight rules constitutes her ordination (*Cullavagga* X 2.2).

Furthermore, as Tessa Bartholomeusz points out, the structure of the eight rules violates the usual format of the Buddha's formulation of new rules.⁵⁴ In almost all other cases in the *Vinaya*, a transgression precedes and motivates the formulation of a new rule. No mention of transgression precedes the institution of the eight *garudhammas*.

The narrative does, however, present Mahāpajāpatī challenging the Buddha's authority. The intent and explicit content of the eight rules clearly concern issues of hierarchy in the *sangha*. Each rule in all accounts specifically subordinates *bhikkhunīs* to *bhikkhus*. Perhaps we could interpret Mahāpajāpatī's initiative as a challenge to the superior status of men over women, which constitutes a transgression. Her relationship with the Buddha and the "debt" he owes her are consistently emphasized in the

⁵⁴See Tessa Bartholomeusz, "Women Under the Bo Tree" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1991), p. 56. As Bartholomeusz argues, the rules are also anomalous in that they are either redundant with, or contradicted by, rules contained in the *Bhikkhunī Vibhanga* (pp. 55-61).

accounts. While her status may modify the usual supremacy of men over women, her request transgresses the boundaries: she approaches him not in his role as her nephew and foster-son, but as the Buddha, leader of a religious organization. As such, the Buddha cannot accede to her, but requires the intervention of Ānanda so the "proper" hierarchy can be re-established.

We find confirmation of this emphasis on hierarchy in the pattern of interaction contained in the rest of *Cullavagga X* and throughout the *Vinaya*. Very rarely do *bhikkhunīs*, even Mahāpajāpatī, approach the Buddha. Rather, in the vast majority of cases in *Cullavagga X* and throughout the *Bhikkhunī-Vibhaṅga*, *bhikkhunīs* report to *bhikkhus* who report to the Buddha, who then issues a proclamation. Even when Mahāpajāpatī requests the overturning of the first *garudhamma* (that all *bhikkhunīs* must make obeisance to all *bhikkhus*, despite relative seniority), she approaches Ānanda to ask the Buddha on her behalf (*Cullavagga X* 3). In this case, the Buddha refuses Ānanda's petition and prohibits to *bhikkhus* any deferential treatment of *bhikkhunīs*.

The Buddha's prediction of the decline of the *dhamma* as a direct result of women's presence in the order is also an anomalous feature of the story. As Buddhaghosa has asked, why would the Buddha have admitted women if this would result in a decline of *saddhamma*?⁵⁵ In all accounts of the story, this

⁵⁵*Samantapāsādikā*, p. 534.

prediction is left unexplained, though the similes of destruction do provide an elaboration of the kind of devastation to expect.

The similes of the house prey to robbers, the rice field stricken by disease, and the sugar-cane attacked by red rust are consistent in the differing accounts of the story. Some accounts omit or condense one or more of the three similes, but all employ the imagery of contagion and contamination concomitant with women's entrance into the *sangha*.⁵⁶ Similarly, all accounts present the metaphor of the eight rules holding back the threat of devastation as a dyke on a river prevents flooding.

Clearly, women's entry into the Buddhist *sangha* is both highly significant and terribly dangerous within the worldview of this narrative. Given the emphasis on preserving the *dhamma* throughout Pali literature, we should expect to see the story seriously address the reasons for the danger posed by women's ordination. Yet in the story, the reasons why women pose such a threat and the logic of how subordination can alleviate the threat are not explored. This narrative reticence is exceedingly incongruous in the context of

⁵⁶The Mūlasarvastivādin account translated by Rockhill omits reference to the rice field (p. 61); the Sanskrit Mulasarvastivādin text omits the diseased rice field, but describes a field struck by lightning (Ridding and de la Vallee Poussin, p. 126; Wilson, p. 84); the Mahāsamghika-Lokottaravādin account omits reference to thieves entering the household, but presents three crops falling to disease (Roth, p. 9-10; Nolot, p. 12).

Buddhist literature.

Also incongruous is the placement of the story in the final chapters of the *Cullavagga* (the "lesser collection"), followed only by the accounts of the councils which clearly post-date the Buddha's death. I discuss this odd placement below (pp. 236-249), but for now we should note how this placement renders problematic the appearance of *bhikkhunīs* throughout the *Vinaya*. Unlike *bhikkhus*, whose admission to the order precedes all other rules specific to them (*Mahāvagga* I 6.32-47), *bhikkhunīs* appear throughout the *Vinaya* prior to the story of their admission and the rules for their ordination. As we shall see, this odd placement is a direct contradiction of the care more typical of the *Vinaya* to explain its rules and procedures with a paradigmatic story from which the necessity for such rules and procedures usually follows.

Clearly, women's entrance into the order is problematic. The story is pervaded by incongruity: Mahāpajāpatī's authority is emphasised yet undermined; Ānanda, usually obedient and respectful, argues with the Buddha; the Buddha changes his mind, even though he realizes women's ordination will halve the lifetime of *saddhamma*; and the redactors of the *Vinaya* have chosen to place the story at the very end, even though *bhikkhunīs* appear throughout the *Vinaya*.

In the rest of the thesis I examine possible reasons for these incongruities. The anomalous treatment of women's ordination is maintained throughout the Pali *Vinaya*. The

authority and leadership of *bhikkhunīs* is presented as problematic, the presence of *bhikkhunīs* as somehow threatening the Buddha's teachings is consistently maintained, and, in every category of *Vinaya* literature, the texts addressing *bhikkhunī* concerns are placed at the end of texts about *bhikkhus*. In the following chapters, I analyze the *Vinaya* narratives to determine patterns of expression that can help us understand these consistent anomalies.

At the heart of the issues raised by the anomalies is the question of identity. If women's ordination is so problematic that it actually leads to the disintegration of the order and the collapse of the teachings that sustain that order, what does it mean to be a Buddhist renunciant? What is it about women that is antithetical to the Buddhist path of renunciation? In the chapters that follow I investigate the question of identity, as it is expressed in the Pali *Vinaya*. I also examine the role of women and especially *bhikkhunīs* in the narrative development of the renunciant identity, but I refrain from interpreting the Mahāpajāpatī story until the conclusion where I compile and synthesize the results of my study.

CHAPTER II

Boundaries and Identity in the Buddha Biography

The *Vinaya-Piṭaka*, one of the three main categories of Pali Buddhist literature,¹ contains the code of monastic rules and regulations that guide, standardize, and prescribe the lifestyle of the *sangha* and its members. The term *vinaya* is unanimously translated as "discipline". Etymologically, however, the term is composed of the prefix *vi*, "distinction, apart, away from, etc." + the verb *ñī*, "to lead". As an active verb, the combination would mean "to lead away from". In nominal form, as in *Vinaya*, it would mean "that which separates" or "that which removes".²

The term is appropriate for a code of regulations pertaining to the Buddhist renunciant community. Doctrinally, the Buddhist renunciant is supposed to be fully separate from all ties to the household life that is renounced. These ties, the bonds or fetters that lead to continued rebirth, must be

¹The other two are the *Sutta-Piṭaka* and the *Abhidhamma-Piṭaka*, the former of which contains discourses of the Buddha (*suttas*) on the nature of *dhamma*, while the latter is concerned with philosophical discussions.

²PED sv. *vinaya*. I am indebted to John Holt, *Discipline: The Canonical Buddhism of the Vinayapitaka* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), p. 3 for directing me to this etymology.

removed from all aspects of one's being, including one's body, one's speech, and one's mind. Renunciation is affirmed without reservation in Pali texts as the most efficacious lifestyle to effect this separation and removal. As the code of conduct for renunciants, the *Vinaya*, therefore, is literally and functionally that which accomplishes separation.

The *Vinaya* is composed of two main sections, the *Sutta-Vibhanga* and the *Khandhakas*, and an appendix, the *Parivāra*. The *Sutta-Vibhanga*, generally considered to be the oldest stratum,³ is also divided into two parts, the *Mahāvibhanga* (*Bhikkhu-Vibhanga*) and the *Bhikkhunī-Vibhanga*, both of which contain the *Pātimokkha*, the rules for individual behaviours specific to *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* respectively. Similarly, the *Khandhakas* are split into two sections, the *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga*, which contain rules and procedures that apply to the administration of the *sangha* as a whole (the *kammavācā*).

The *Vinaya* thus represents a very formalized statement of both the individual and communal dimensions of monastic life. It prescribes the activities, appearance, decorum, and lifestyle of individual *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. It also specifies the procedures and protocol for the administration

³See, for example, the discussion in K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature: Including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of all the Hīnayāna Schools of Buddhism* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), p. 20, and that in Jotiya Dhira-sekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline: A Study of its Origin and Development in Relation to the Sutta and Vinaya Pitakas* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena and Co. [Printers] Ltd., 1982), p. 16.

of the *sangha*. In so doing, the *Vinaya* authorizes and delimits the mandate of the monastic community over its members and in relation to its supporting community. In the terms of my analysis, it articulates a model of self-identity and a set of guidelines for the expression of that identity.

This model of identity is perhaps most evident in the frame narratives that pervade the *Vinaya*, opening both major categories of rules (the *Sutta-Vibhanga* and the *Khandhakas*), and introducing each individual rule. Both the *Sutta-Vibhanga* and the *Khandhakas* follow a consistent format which includes an introductory story for each rule, a statement of the rule itself, an "Old Commentary"⁴ which explains the terms used in the rule, and, frequently though not always, a series of secondary stories which lead to modifications or applications of the rule. These introductory stories, or frame narratives, describe the particular circumstances underlying the necessity of the rule and its characteristics. They provide justification for the rule and place it in a meaningful context.

The "master-narrative" which frames the *Vinaya* as a whole is the Buddha biography. It is in the context of the Buddha's realization of *nibbāna* and his subsequent teaching career that

⁴I follow I.B. Horner, *Book of Discipline*, and K.R. Norman, *Pali Literature*, in describing this explanatory discussion as the "Old Commentary". As a term by term analysis of the content of each rule, the discussion clearly follows the pattern of commentarial literature, though it is close enough to the date of composition to be included in the canonical texts which are, themselves, the subject of commentary.

the rules of the *Vinaya* make sense. We see this very clearly in the frame narratives of the *Vinaya*'s main sections and individual rules. The *Khandhakas* and *Vibhaṅgas* both open with a description of the Buddha's activities which explains and justifies the type of rules contained in each category. In the *Mahāvagga*, which opens the *Khandhakas*, the frame narrative describes the Buddha's experience of *nibbāna*, his decision to teach, and the subsequent origins of the *sangha*. The rules and procedures of the rest of the *Khandhakas* are thus placed in the context of the Buddha's enlightenment and are explained by his decision to institute a monastic community. Similarly, the *Suttavibhaṅga* opens with a description of the attributes of the Buddha's enlightenment and introduces a dialogue in which the Buddha explains to Sāriputta the conditions under which he must mandate individual rules of conduct for his monastics. The *Pātimokkha* is thus explained as necessitated by particular circumstances which affect renunciants' ability to attain *nibbāna*.

Each individual rule in both sections is also placed in the context of the Buddha's teaching career. The stories introducing each rule open with a statement of the Buddha's location at the time of formulation. For the vast majority of rules, the Buddha himself voices the rule and its modifications.⁵ Though there is general agreement among scholars that

⁵There are exceptions to this, usually in the secondary rules which modify or extend the application of the main rule. See, for example, the secondary rules in *Saṅghādisesa* IX, X,

the *Vinaya* was compiled and much of it composed after the Buddha's death,⁶ his presence and voice function to authorize and validate the rules and the *Vinaya* as a whole.⁷

For the purpose of my interpretation, the historicity of the *Vinaya's* references to the Buddha's presence and authoriz-

and XI. For a discussion, see I.B. Horner, *BD I*, p. xvi.

⁶Most scholars accept a relatively early dating for the *Vinaya* because of consistency among the recensions in the various schools. For the most part, the composition and compilation of the *Vinaya* as we have it, the theory maintains, must predate the schisms that follow the second council, c. 340 BCE. For a thorough discussion of the schism and debates in the scholarship about dating and reasons for the schism, see Janice Nattier and Charles Prebish, "Mahāsāṃghika Origins: The Beginnings of Buddhist Sectarianism" (*History of Religions* 16 [1977]: 237-272) and references therein. Recently, Gregory Schopen has challenged this theory, arguing that important sections of the Pali *Vinaya* dealing with *stūpas* have been either lost or intentionally omitted from the extant texts. "The *Stūpa* Cult and the Extant Pāli *Vinaya*" (*Journal of the Pali Text Society* 13 [1989]: 83-100). Scholars of Pali Buddhism refute Schopen's claim in the next volume of the *Journal of the Pali Text Society* (15 [1990]). See O. von Hinuber, "Khandhakavatta: Loss of Text in the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka*?" (pp. 127-138); Richard Gombrich, "Making Mountains Without Molehills: The Case of the Missing *Stūpa*" (pp. 141-143); and, especially, Charles Hallisey, "Apropos the Pāli *Vinaya* as a Historical Document: A Reply to Gregory Schopen" (pp. 197-208). Steven Collins, however, affirms the cautionary note introduced by Gregory Schopen, arguing that the whole of the Pali Canon, indeed, the actual concept of the Pali Canon as a "closed list of scriptures with special and specific authority as the avowed historical record of the Buddha's teaching" is best understood as the product of a particular lineage in Sri Lanka who employed their recension of the texts in a context of political struggles for hegemony in the fifth century as a "strategy of legitimation". "On the Very Idea of the Pali Canon" (*Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15 [1990]: 89-126), p. 89.

⁷This point is made by almost all scholars studying the *Vinaya*. For example, see Horner, *BD I*, p. xvi, G.S.P. Misra, *The Age of Vinaya* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1972), p. 9, and John Holt, *Discipline: The Canonical Buddhism of the Vinayapitaka* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), p. 16.

ation are not at issue. The attempt to determine the chronological strata contained in the textual sources is futile without recourse to comparison of the differing recensions of the *Vinaya* in the languages in which they are extant and to concrete historical data which is simply non-existent.⁸ Rather, I am interested in the function of that authority within the textual tradition itself. As Mohan Wijayaratna says,

... whenever we find that the origin of a particular rule is attributed to the Buddha, we may conclude *either* that at the time when the definitive version of the code of discipline was drawn up, this rule was thought to be a precept established by the Buddha himself, or that at that time the disciples felt the need to present or regard such a rule as coming from him. Whether or not one or another precept was in fact established by the Buddha, what is important from our point of view is the sense and interpretation it is given by Theravāda monasticism.⁹

This tendency to call upon the presence of the Buddha and invoke the authority of his voice is not unique to the *Vinaya* literature of the Pali canon, or even to the Pali canon itself. Indeed, a reference to the Buddha and his location comprises part of the opening formula common to the vast majority of *suttas* as they are preserved in the many languages of Buddhist literature: "Thus have I heard, at one time the

⁸Here I concur with the view of Steven Collins, "Introduction" to Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life: According to the Texts of the Theravāda Tradition*, trans. by Claude Grangier and Steven Collins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. xviii.

⁹Ibid. This excerpt from Wijayaratna's French Introduction is quoted in Collins' Introduction.

Buddha was staying [at such and such a place]."¹⁰ Texts opening with this formula are thus imbued with authority and authenticity. Because they are the words of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*), they are true, they are efficacious, they are worthy of emulation.

The frame narratives in the *Vinaya* have much the same function. The episodes of the Buddha biography which open the two major sections of the *Vinaya* clearly authorize and legitimize the rules contained therein. They also enable us to discern a pattern that pervades the frame narratives in the *Vinaya* and underlies the extreme concern for detail, repetition, and comprehensiveness that characterizes the text's discussions of individual rules. As I will argue in this and the following chapters, the basic purpose of the *Vinaya* is to

¹⁰*evam me sutam samayam bhagavā ... viharati.* This formula and its punctuation has produced a debate among scholars and ancient commentators. The issues debated revolve around questions of authority. If the phrase is punctuated (as I have) after the first phrase (*evam me sutam*), the authority rests with the direct personal authority of the speaker (traditionally, Ānanda at the first council) who speaks from memory. If the phrase is punctuated after the second phrase (*evam me sutam samayam*), authority resides in the transmission. Most recent scholars argue in favour of the punctuation I have reproduced. See John Brough, "Thus Have I Heard..." (*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13 [1949]: 416-426); N.H. Samtani, "The Opening of the Buddhist Sūtras" (*Bhāratī* 8 [1964-65]: 47-63); Jonathan Silk, "A Note on the Opening Formula of Buddhist Sūtras" (*Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 12 [1989]: 158-163); and Brian Galloway, "Thus Have I Heard: At One Time..." (*Indo-Iranian Journal* 34 [1991]: 87-104). For a discussion of the issues involved in attributing texts to the Buddha himself, see Graeme MacQueen, "Inspired Speech in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism I and II" (*Religion* 11 [1981]: 303-319 and 12 [1982]: 49-65) and James McDermott, "Scripture as the Word of the Buddha" (*Numen* 31 [1984]: 22-39).

define, protect, and preserve the identity of membership in the *sangha*. As John Holt maintains, "[t]he *Vinaya* is the product of one highly regarded attempt to define membership in that community, a serious reckoning with the central concern of 'what it means to be Buddhist.'"¹¹ The answer evident in the *Vinaya* is a soteriological one: "what it means to be Buddhist" is to actively work towards attaining *nibbāna*. The *Vinaya* specifies in great detail the lifestyle required to obtain this goal. In fact, according to Richard Gombrich, *Vinaya* prescriptions not only stipulate behaviours and attitudes conducive to attaining the goal, but actually describe the way one would live naturally, after its attainment.¹²

In the following chapters, I develop the argument that the *Vinaya* establishes a model of identity for both the community (Chapter III) and the individual (Chapter IV). In this chapter, I examine only the Buddha biography that frames the *Mahāvagga*, arguing that the biography exemplifies a model identity and negotiates the transference of that identity from the person of the Buddha to the corporate entity that is the *sangha*. My argument is that the renunciant identity portrayed and promoted in *Vinaya* literature is not only modelled on the life of the Buddha, but is actually designed in symbolic terms

¹¹Holt, *Discipline*, p. 30

¹²Richard Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), p. 89, citing Michael Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka* (Delhi, 1983), p.281.

to embody the Buddha. The *sangha* as it is presented in the Pali *Vinaya* is the communal representation of the Buddha's *bodhi*, his enlightened state. It is for this reason that the *Vinaya* exhibits such a pervasive concern to protect the *sangha's* purity, enforce its separation, and construct and preserve its hierarchy. These features are the defining characteristics of *bodhi* itself.

In incorporating the Buddha's *bodhi*, however, the *Vinaya* also incorporates his maleness. The model identity portrayed throughout the *Vinaya* is inherently masculine. In this chapter, I develop this argument by analyzing the Buddha biography as a paradigm for the enlightened lifestyle which, as I argue in following chapters, pervades the *Vinaya* as whole.

The paradigm is developed in three main episodes of the narrative, each of which concludes with an assessment of the number of *arahants* ("perfected ones") now residing in the world. The narrative opens with a description of the Buddha immediately after his awakening (*bodhi*), describing his initial post-enlightenment activities and interactions. The episode ends with the Buddha's conversion of his former colleagues, the group of five. The second episode describes the renunciation of Yasa and concludes with a large number of Yasa's male friends and relatives following him into the *sangha*. The final episode presents the Buddha authorizing the *sangha* to teach the *dhamma* in his place.

Expanding Boundaries: The Buddha's Enlightenment

According to Erich Frauwallner's classic study, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature*, the *Khandhaka* in its entirety was originally enclosed within a biography of the Buddha.¹³ In Frauwallner's analysis, this biography split up over time and parts of it were omitted from the *Khandhaka* and included in other collections of literature. The *Khandhaka* as we have it today, however, contains remnants of the original, opening with an account of the Buddha's enlightenment and teaching, and ending with his death and the councils.

Frauwallner's work has not been without its critics, especially his claim to have discovered the "ur-text" and to have dated and located the geographical centres from which the various recensions of the *Khandhaka* in differing schools derive.¹⁴ His argument, however, has value, on a symbolic

¹³Erich Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* (Rome: Is.M.E.O., 1956), pp. 51-52.

¹⁴See Charles Prebish, "Theories Concerning the Skandhaka: An Appraisal" (*Journal of Asian Studies* 32 [1973]: 669-678). However, Frauwallner's contention about the original framing of the *Khandhaka* within the Buddha biography does have considerable support. The *Mūlasarvāstivādin* and *Mahāsāṃghika Vinayas* contain an entire account of the *Maṇāparinibbāna-sutta* immediately before their accounts of the first council; the *Sarvāstivādin*, *Dharmaguptaka*, and *Haimavata Vinayas* contain large portions of the narrative; and only the Pali and *Mahīśśaka* omit the narrative while presenting a bare council account (Frauwallner, pp. 44-45). Similarly, only two of the *Vinayas* (the *Sarvāstivādin* and *Mahāsāṃghika*) omit discussion of the Buddha's early teaching career (*ibid*, p. 49).

level if not in historical terms. Even if we do not accept Frauwallner's argument for the original content of the *Khandhaka*, his insight into the importance of the Buddha biography in the *Vinaya* cannot be denied.¹⁵ Whether or not the "original" *Vinaya* was encapsulated within a fully developed biography, the Pali *Vinaya* as it exists today is framed within a context of meaning supplied by pertinent episodes from the Buddha's biography.

Significantly, this biography is limited to the Buddha's post-enlightenment activities. Events of his life prior to his attainment of *nibbāna* are simply non-existent in the Pali *Vinaya*, though they dominate his biography in other sources. This emphasis is very important. The Pali *Vinaya* does not treat the Buddha as a model of renunciation, but of enlightenment; it is not concerned with his transition from householder to ascetic, but, rather, with the characteristics of his enlightened state, particularly as they pertain to his behaviour and actions. It is interested in his identity as

¹⁵Despite problems with Frauwallner's analysis, scholars continue to cite his work and applaud its value. For example, see Heinz Bechert, "The Buddhist Sangha" (in *Buddhism and Asian History: Religion, History and Culture. Readings from the Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by Joseph Kitagawa and Mark Cummings, N.Y.: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987, pp. 289-296); K.R. Norman, *Pali Literature*, p. 37; Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism* (trans. by Sara Webb-Boin, Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1988), pp. 176-179; Richard Gombrich, "The Evolution of the Sangha" (in *Buddhism: Buddhist Monks and Nuns in Society and Culture*, ed. by Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1984, pp. 77-89), p. 79.

Buddha, a fully enlightened one.¹⁶

We see indications of this in the *Mahāvagga's* description of the Buddha's enlightenment and subsequent teaching activities. The account opens with the Buddha sitting under the *bodhi* tree for seven days revelling in the bliss of freedom (*vimuttisukhapatisamvedī*, *Mahāvagga* I 1.1). He then reviews the chain of conditioned co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) in forward and in reverse order in each of the three watches of the night (*Mahāvagga* I 1.2-7). At the end of each watch, he utters a verse summarizing his successive deliberations: (1) doubts vanish when causality (*sahetudhamma*) is understood; (2) doubts vanish when destruction of causality (*khayaṃ paccayānam*) is understood; and (3) as the sun lights up the sky, he stands having defeated Māra's army.¹⁷

This opening sequence situates the discussion that follows in the context of the Buddha's enlightenment experience, understood here as the complete comprehension of the

¹⁶This is confirmed by Frauwallner's analysis of the biography of the Buddha as constituting the earliest *Khandhaka*. The parts that "crumbled away" are those that emphasize the person of the Buddha such as his pre-enlightenment experiences and his activities just prior to his death. In both the beginning and end of the biographical sketches (*Mahāvagga* I and *Cullavagga* XI), details of the Buddha's life (and death) are assumed but not explicitly described. For example, *Mahāvagga* I assumes knowledge of the identity of the Buddha's former teachers and colleagues; *Cullavagga* XI assumes funeral arrangements for the Buddha. Those parts of the biography that pertain directly to the *sangha*, however, are maintained.

¹⁷*vidhūpayam tiṭṭhati Mārasenaṃ suriyo 'va obhāsayam antalikkhan.*

inter-related nature of all things. He then proceeds to travel with his newly acquired knowledge. In the next three sections of the text, the Buddha moves three times, finds a tree and repeats his week-long revel. At each location, he is approached, first by a *brahman*, then by a *nāga* king, and finally by two merchants.

Initially the *brahman* asks the Buddha what it is that makes one a *brahman*. The Buddha responds with a solemn utterance (*udāna*) that a (true) *brahman* has eliminated evil (*bāhitapāpa*), does not utter the sound "hum" (*nihuhuṅka*), is devoid of *āsavas* (*nikasāva*), and is self-controlled (*yatatta*). He lives the *brahmacariya*, speaks the (true) speech of *brahma* (*brahmavādam vadeyya*) and has no protrusions (*ussada*)¹⁸ anywhere in the world. In other words, the true *brahman* is an *arahant*, a "fully perfected one" in the Buddhist path.¹⁹ The

¹⁸Translated by Horner as "blemish". I am really not sure what Horner means by this. According to the PED, the term conveys a variety of meanings including (1) prominence, protuberance, fullness, arrogance, (2) bump, swelling, (3) ointment, (4) crowd, (5) qualification, characteristic, mark, or attribute. If, as the PED thinks likely, the term derives from the Sanskrit *ud* + *syad*, the connotations of flowing and oozing are similar to those of *āsavas*. The implication of the *ussadas* impinging on the world tends to support the connotation of pure self-containment I have attempted to preserve with my translation as "protrusion".

¹⁹This twisting of the term "*brahman*" is very common in Buddhist literature and reflects the Buddha's characteristic technique of appropriating and adapting the terminology employed by rival ascetic groups of his time to his own purposes. For a thorough adaptation of the term "*brahman*", see the *Dhammapāṭi*, Chapter 26. For discussion of this technique, see Richard Gombrich's analysis of the *Aggañña Sutta*, "The Buddha's Book of Genesis?" (*Indo-Iranian Journal* 35 [1992]: 159-178).

emphases here are on control, purity, and integrity, and they are expressed in the *brahman's* body, speech, and mind. These emphases, as we shall see, also characterize the Buddha himself.

After this interaction with the *brahman*, the Buddha moves to a second tree and is approached by a *nāga* (serpent) king. The *nāga* king does not address the Buddha, but, encircling him within its coils, protects him from a storm. The *nāga* then assumes the form of a boy and salutes the Buddha, who utters another solemn utterance (*udāna*) about the supreme happiness (*sukha*) of learning the *dhamma* (*sutadhamma*), restraining (*sam-yama*) oneself from harming living beings, overcoming (*sama-tikkama*) desire, and abolishing (*vinaya*) egotism.

Finally, the Buddha moves to yet another tree where two merchants passing by are informed by a spirit (*devatā*) of his presence, his recent attainment of buddhahood (*paṭhamābhisambuddha*), and the merits that will accrue from giving him food. They offer him food which the Buddha accepts in crystal bowls supplied by Kings of the Four Quarters (*catuddisa Mahārāja*).²⁰ The merchants then ask for refuge in the Buddha and the *dhamma*, hence becoming the first *upāsakas* (male lay-followers) of the Buddha (*Mahāvagga* I 2-4).

These opening passages introduce a very important empha-

²⁰I do not know who these "kings" are. I assume from the context that they are some kind of cosmic lords of the four directions. According to the PED (sv *cātur*^o), they inhabit the lowest of the six *devalokas*.

sis that is maintained throughout the *Vinaya*. The Buddha's experience of *nibbāna* is central. The rest of his life is clearly of little concern to the redactors of the *Vinaya*. But even with the centrality of *nibbāna*, priority is not given to the characteristics of the experience, but to what the Buddha does with it. What does the Buddha do? He travels. He extends the experience to different locations, assuming the same posture, dwelling on the same sensation, remaining for the same period of time. In the terms of our analysis, he expands the boundaries of the experience itself, spreading a taste of *nibbāna* to four different trees.²¹

He also attracts a diverse audience. Though he has yet to preach a word of *dhamma*, he manages to attract a *brahman*, a *nāga* king, the *catuddisa* kings, an unnamed *devatā*, and his first *upāsakas*. All recognize his accomplishments without him speaking a word.²² Their gifts and homage mark their recognition of him as somehow other than they are, as worthy to receive, as a productive field of merit.

They also recognize a boundary around him. The *brahman* and the merchants stand at a respectful distance from him and

²¹The text does not say this, but we could speculate that these four trees correspond to the Great Kings of the Four Directions. If so, the Buddha is extending his *bodhi* to encompass symbolically the whole cosmos, which is arguably an underlying theme in the *Vinaya*.

²²Some might see his conversation with the *brahman* as an exception to this. I think, though, that the *brahman* soliciting the Buddha's opinion as to what constitutes a *brahman* is at least an implicit recognition.

the *nāga* king encircles him to protect him from cold, heat, flies, mosquitoes, wind, and snakes. Significantly, the *nāga* thinks to prevent contact (*samphassa*) between these elements and the meditating Buddha (*Mahāvagga* I 1.2). The homage and gifts given to the Buddha reinforce this boundary, this ontological difference between the Buddha and his audience, though the audience includes distinguished representatives of various super-human realms (the *catuddisa* kings and the *nāga*-king).

In these introductory episodes, therefore, we see the Buddha's *bodhi* expanding geographically, socially (the *brahman* and the merchants), and cosmically. It is an event for all beings in manifest realms. Up to this point, however, it is still confined to the Buddha. He has yet to teach the *dhamma*, yet to incorporate these others into the sphere of his *bodhi*, though the boundaries of his sphere impinge upon them.

In the next episode in the text this situation is rectified. Here, the Buddha is convinced by Brahmā Sahampati (the chief of the gods, creator of the world)²³ to teach the *dhamma* though he is initially hesitant to do so. His hesitance derives from a rather pessimistic assessment of the capabilities of human beings to understand the *dhamma*, reject sensual pleasures, and renounce all attachment (*MV* I 5:2-3). Trying to teach the *dhamma* to such beings would be exhausting and worrisome for him, and as he says, his toil is over, why

²³At least according to the PED, sv. Brahmā.

increase it further?²⁴

Fearing the end of the world, Brahmā Sahampati appears before the Buddha, pays homage to him, and asks him to teach as there are some beings having little defilement (*apparakkhajātikā*)²⁵ who are currently languishing from not hearing the *dhamma*, but are capable of learning (*bhavissanti aññātāra*) the *dhamma* (*Mahāvagga* I 5.6). Furthermore, Brahmā claims, there had already appeared in Magadha an impure (*asuddha*) *dhamma* produced by contaminated (*samala*) minds. The world needs the Buddha's *dhamma*.

The Buddha repeats his pessimistic assessment and again Brahmā Sahampati asks. A second time the Buddha repeats himself and a third time Brahma asks. This time the Buddha surveys the world with his buddha-eye (*buddhacakkhu*), perceiving the various capabilities of beings (*Mahāvagga* I 5.10). As a result of discovering beings who are indeed undefiled, he decides that "the doors of the undying" should be opened to "those who (can) hear" (*apārutā tesam amatassa dvārā ye*

²⁴Upon making the decision, the Buddha utters verses which the text claims "have not been heard before in the past" (*gāthāyo pubbe assutapubbā*, *Mahāvagga* I 5.3). This places Gautama in the context of Buddhas of the past, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, is an important component of his decision to institute the *Pātimokkha*.

²⁵Horner translates this term as "with little dust in their eyes" (BD IV, p. 8). I think, though, that the connotation of purity I have preserved in my translation is consistent throughout the account. See, for example the next section of the text where these beings are compared with lotuses undefiled (*anupalitta*) by the muddy water in which they grow (*Mahāvagga* I 5.10-11) -- a classic image of purity in Buddhist texts.

sotavanto, *Mahāvagga* I 5.12).

This metaphoric opening of the doors represents his decision to expand his boundaries even further by allowing others into the sphere of his *bodhi*, that is, to teach the *dhamma* and create a path of renunciation for others.

Just as he expected, however, teaching poses problems. He decides initially to teach Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, his former teachers. But they are both dead, as he is informed by *devatās*.²⁶ He then decides to teach the five ascetics with whom he had practised previously. Again, though, his intentions are thwarted by his unexpected encounter with the Ājīvaka, Upaka. Upaka notices immediately that the Buddha has reached a very special level of attainment, saying, "Your reverence, your faculties are very clear, your complexion very clean and purified. On account of whom have you renounced, who is your teacher, of whose *dhamma* do you approve?"²⁷ The Buddha responds with a recital of his unique accomplishments, claiming that he alone is the supreme teacher, he alone is fully enlightened (*eko 'mhi sammāsambuddho*). He does not, therefore, need to follow anyone, need

²⁶Here we have a remarkable lapse in the Buddha's capabilities. As a fully enlightened one, he is supposed to know clairvoyantly the fate of all beings. Granted that the texts are frequently inconsistent, I still find it odd that the Buddha's virtual omniscience should fail him at this crucial juncture. Similarly odd is the Buddha's concern for his own exhaustion and anxiety with regard to teaching the ignorant.

²⁷*vippasannāni kho te āvuso indriyāni, parisuddho chavi-
vanṇo pariyodāto. kaṃ 'si tvam āvuso uddissa pabbajito, ko vā
te satthā, kassa vā tvam dhammam rocesīti. Mahāvagga* I 6.7.

anyone as teacher, or need to approve anyone's *dhamma*. Instead, he travels to Kāsi (Benaras) to turn the wheel of *dhamma* (*dhammacakka*) himself.

Upaka replies that if this is true, he deserves to be (called) a conqueror of the infinite (*anantajina*).²⁸ Yes, responds the Buddha, as would anyone like him who has attained extinction of the *āsavas*. He has conquered evil and is, therefore, a conqueror.²⁹ Upaka acknowledges that it may be so, but, shaking his head, departs by a different path (perhaps "wrong path", *ummagga*, *Mahāvagga* I 6.7-9).³⁰

Like the *brahman*, *nāga*, *devatās*, *caturdisa* Kings, and *Brahmā*, Upaka recognizes the Buddha's enlightened qualities without him saying a word of the *dhamma*: the Buddha's *bodhi* is manifest in his appearance. Unlike these others, however,

²⁸*yathā kho tvam āvuso paṭijānāsi arah' asi anantajino*. Horner translates the phrase *arah' asi anantajino* as "you ought to be victor" to convey a contemptuous tone to Upaka's words, though she acknowledges other possible translations (BD IV, p. 12-13, n. 7). I have translated it as "you deserve to be (called) conqueror" to preserve the emphasis on titles of address I see maintained throughout the account. As we shall see below, the Buddha refuses to teach the *dhamma* to his former colleagues until they address him properly.

²⁹*mādisā ve jinā honti ye pattā āsavakkhayaṃ, jitā me pāpakā dhammā tasmāham Upaka jino 'ti*.

³⁰For an alternate, shorter version of this and the preceding episodes, see Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1884), pp. 33-36. In this *Mūlasarvāstivādin* account, Upaka recognizes the Buddha as a conqueror, but goes his own way (p. 36). The *Mahāvastu* also contains a similar version. The *Mahāvastu* trans. by J.J. Jones, London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1956, Vol. III, pp. 314-319). In the *Mahāvastu* account, Upaka questions the Buddha in greater depth, but neither acknowledges him nor leaves.

Upaka is not convinced by his encounter with the Buddha. He expresses scepticism repeatedly, stating that the Buddha "deserves to be" (or ought to be, *arah' asi*) called conqueror and that he "may be" (*hupeyya*) speaking the truth. Furthermore, Upaka continues to address him with the moderately respectful "your reverence" (*āvusa*). He also chooses to go his own way (*ummagga*), by implication, choosing not to follow the Buddha's path.

Upaka, a member of the *Ājīvikas* (a rival sect of ascetics), acknowledges the Buddha's attributes but does not concede his superiority. He treats the Buddha as his equal. Up to this point in the narrative everyone else has accorded the Buddha special status: the *brahman* asks the Buddha to define a (true) *brahman*; the *nāga* king protects him and pays him homage; the merchants, *devatā*, and *catuddisa* kings affirm his worthiness to receive gifts; and *Brahmā* depends on him to save the world.

These interactions play a crucial role in the narrative development of the characteristics of an enlightened being. By virtue of his attainment of supreme buddhahood, the Buddha is superior to all kinds of beings. This, I think, is the narrative function of the various types of beings he encounters and their high status. Each of them recognizes and pays homage to his superiority. His identity is thus characterized by superiority and distinction: he is worthy of respect and gifts because of this superiority. In attaining *bodhi* and

becoming the Buddha he has superceded them.

However, the Buddha is presented as relatively equal with a member of a rival sect. Upaka is clearly unconvinced by the Buddha's attainments, yet the narrative does not condemn him or predict his downfall as would be expected from similar events in other sources.³¹ In this narrative, Upaka's treatment of the Buddha is accepted without comment, even from Buddhaghosa. In this interaction, the Buddha is not presented as inherently superior to another ascetic.

This can be explained with reference to the tension that is maintained throughout Pali literature with respect to rival ascetic groups. The Buddhist *sangha* is both a part of, and apart from, other ascetic groups who form what is known as the *śramaṇa* movement.³² The Buddha is superior to all kinds of

³¹For example, when the ascetic Sañjaya refuses to join Sāriputta and Moggallāna in the *sangha*, blood issues forth from his mouth. Also unusual in this presentation of Upaka is the text's reticence from condemning Ājīvika doctrine. Buddhist texts are well known for the acrimony with which they treat rival sects. See the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (D I) and Graeme MacQueen, *A Study of the śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988) and idem, "The Doctrines of the Six Heretics According to the *śrāmaṇyaphala sūtra*" (*Indo-Iranian Journal* 27 [1984]: 291-307).

³²For studies of this movement, see A.K. Warder, "On the Relationships Between Early Buddhism and Other Contemporary Systems" (*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 18 [1956]: 43-63); Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History* (Bashir Bagh, Hyderabad: Orient Longman Ltd., 1978), especially Chapters III and IV; idem, "The Householder and the Renouncer in the Brahmanical and Buddhist Traditions" (*Contributions to Indian Sociology* 15 [1981]: 273-298); and Padmanabh Jaini, "Sramanas: Their Conflict with Brāhmanical Society" (in *Chapters in Indian Civilization*, Vol. I, ed. by J.W. Elder, Kendall: Hunt Pub. Col., 1970, pp. 39-81).

beings in the manifest worlds, but he is also a *samaṇa*.

This alliance does not hold, however, when the Buddha meets up with his former ascetic colleagues, the group of five. In this interaction, the Buddha's superiority again dominates the narrative. His former colleagues are initially suspicious of him for reneging on the austere methods they employed, and they decide to ignore him. Despite their intentions, however, they find themselves receiving him with honour (*Mahāvagga* I.10-11). But the Buddha takes exception to them referring to him as "your reverence" (*āvuso*) as he is a *Tathāgata*, an arahant, a fully-enlightened one (*sammāsambuddha*) who has discovered the eternal (*amata*) and will teach the *dhamma*. If they follow him, they can attain the goal of *brahmacariya* and abide in it (*viharati*, *Mahāvagga* I.12).

They ask him about his method, but remain unconvinced until he contrasts his previous demeanour with his present. They then listen more attentively, accepting his claim. The Buddha introduces them to the middle way which avoids attachment to sensual pleasures and to self-mortification, the eightfold path conducive to the middle way, and the four noble truths that describe the existential condition of human beings. He then describes how knowledge of these truths, when purified (*suvisuddha*), led him to full enlightenment (*Mahāvagga* I 6.17-29).

Hearing this discourse, Koṇḍañña achieves a pure *dhamma* vision (*dharmacakkhu*) of the nature of causality and cessa-

tion. It is at this point in the text that the Buddha is attributed with rolling the wheel of the *dhamma* (*dhammacakka*), an event recognized by *devas* from all the realms, which shakes all existing world-systems and is marked by an incomparable radiance that appears in all world-systems. The text then has the Buddha acknowledging Koṇḍañña's attainment and presents Koṇḍañña requesting *upasampadā* (ordination). The Buddha accepts him with the "*ehi bhikkhu*" formula: "Come, monk, well taught is *dhamma*, live the *brahmacariya* in order to completely end suffering."³³ He then instructs and ordains the remaining members of the original five. After they are accepted the Buddha instructs them on the doctrines of *anatta* ("no-self") and *anicca* (impermanence) which impels them into freedom from the *āsavas* (that is, *nibbāna*). The episode concludes that there are now six *arahants* in the world (*Mahāvagga* I 6.38-47).

This final sequence of events strikes me as crucially important. Here we have the cosmic implications of the Buddha's enlightenment--the *devas* sing, the worlds shake, and light permeates the manifold realms. Significantly, this does not happen with the Buddha's enlightenment but with Koṇḍañña's *dhamma*-vision. The world-shaking events do not happen until an outsider has penetrated the boundary of the Buddha's *bodhi*. The doors are now open and the Buddha can accept Koṇḍañña into the sphere of his enlightenment.

³³*ehi bhikkhū, svākkhāto dhammo, caratha brahmacariyaṃ sammā dukkhassa antakiriyāyā. Mahāvagga* I 6.37.

This event also has an utterly transformative effect on Koṇḍañña. After witnessing the cosmic quake caused by Koṇḍañña's penetration of the *dhamma*, the Buddha utters a solemn utterance (*udāna*): "Truly you comprehend (*aññāsi*), Koṇḍañña! Truly you comprehend!" Thus, the text explains, Koṇḍañña became known as *Aññāta Koṇḍañña*, "Koṇḍañña who has understood" (*Mahāvagga* I 6.31). Just as the cosmos is shaken by Koṇḍañña's entry into the *dhamma*, so is Koṇḍañña himself utterly transformed.

Significantly, this transformation is not effected by Koṇḍañña's attainment of *nibbāna*; this happens later in the text after the Buddha reveals the deeper aspects of the *dhamma*. Koṇḍañña is transformed by his penetration of the *dhamma*, by his entry into the sphere of the Buddha's *bodhi*. He, like all the monastics to follow him, does not need to be enlightened to enter that sphere. Rather, it is within that sphere that he is able to attain *nibbāna*.

This is the true beginning of the *sangha*. It is also the climax of the introductory narrative. This, I believe, reveals the pervasive preoccupation of the authors/redactors of the *Vinaya*. The Buddha's centrality cannot be refuted. But the emphasis is not on him or his doctrine. Rather, the texts portray his influence in the corporate unity of the *sangha*. The narrative may begin with the Buddha's enlightenment, but by the end of this first episode, that enlightenment has expanded to incorporate others within it.

Identifying Boundaries: Paradigms for Renunciation

The narrative of the Buddha's enlightenment and initial teaching has not only served to expand the boundaries, it also helps define their parameters. As we have already noted, the homage paid to the Buddha indicates his transformed state--he is now worthy of respect, protection, and gifts. As we have also seen, those boundaries intersect with a variety of social classes (*brahmans*, merchants, and rival ascetics), a range of super-human creatures (*nāgarāja*, *devatā*, *catuddisa* kings, celestial and terran devas), and the nature of the cosmos itself (earthquakes, supernal manifestation of light). These intersections function to define the parameters of the boundaries themselves. Without interaction across the boundary, its delimitations cannot be known.

These interactions also indicate the transformed status of the Buddha. The fact that eminent lords of the various realms pay homage to the Buddha and seek his advice demonstrates their recognition of his superiority. The boundaries exist and are respected because of this.

Normal folk are not exempt from the influence of this status. Despite the fact that his five colleagues had decided not to greet him, they not only greet him, but also pay him respect (*Mahāvagga* I 6:11). His "natural" superiority is so powerful as to overcome their intentions and compel respectful behaviour. But the Buddha refuses to teach them until they

address him properly.³⁴ They had to formally recognize his status before he would impart to them the *dhamma*. They had to recognize the boundary before they could cross it.

This may help us understand the puzzling episode with Upaka. The Buddha declares his status very clearly by informing Upaka of his enlightenment. But Upaka continues to address him as "your reverence" and remains unconvinced. *Consequently, the Buddha does not teach him the dhamma.* In contrast, the group of five acknowledge that the Buddha has attained a condition transcending that of other humans (*uttarimanussadhamma*). In so doing, they recognize his otherness, his superiority, and acknowledge the boundary between him and normal folk. They are thus capable and worthy of hearing the *dhamma*.

Even here, though, the Buddha differentiates the *dhamma* he teaches them prior to their ordination from that taught following it. This distinction, it seems, has to do with purity. To maintain the boundary of his enlightenment, he must not allow impurity to enter. As he says, he could not attain full enlightenment until he had fully purified (*suvisuddha*) his knowledge of the four *ariyan* truths (*Mahāvagga* I 6.27). In the terms of our analysis, the boundaries did not exist until he had perfectly purified himself.

³⁴This point is also made by Richard Robinson and Willard Johnson, but they attribute it to the necessity of faith. *The Buddhist Religion : A Historical Introduction*, second ed. (North Scituate, Massachusetts: Duxbury Press, 1977), p. 44.

So what is this purity? Repeatedly in the first episode the narrative stresses the concept of purity: the "true" *brahman* is devoid of *āsavas* and protrusions (*ussada*) that impinge on the world (*Mahāvagga* I 2); both the *nāga* king and the *catudisa* kings protect the Buddha from defilement (the *nāga* from the elements; the *caturdisa* kings from dirtying his hands, *Mahāvagga* I 3-4); Brahmā argues that because some people lack defilements (*apparajakkhajātikā*) they are capable of learning the *dhamma* (*Mahāvagga* I 5.6); Upaka recognizes the complete purity (*parisuddha*) of the Buddha's appearance (*Mahāvagga* I 5.7); and the Buddha declares himself a conqueror because he alone is undefiled (*anupalitta*) and free of *āsavas* (*Mahāvagga* I 6.8-9). Clearly, purity is an important concept in the narrative. It is the defining characteristic of the Buddha's enlightenment and comprises the substance of the difference between the Buddha and those who remain outside his sphere of influence.

It also comprises the defining characteristic of the Buddha's sphere of enlightenment. The Buddha was convinced to teach the *dhamma*, to "open the doors" to his sphere, only upon realizing for himself that there are some individuals who lack defilements (*apparajakkha*) in the world (*Mahāvagga* I 5.11): he could open the doors to his *bodhi* only to those who are pure. Koṇḍañña was able to enter those doors, but only after he had attained the *dhammacakkhu*, the "eye of *dhamma*" that purified his perspective.

Purity thus defined and implied in this opening episode encompasses all aspects of the enlightened being, of which the Buddha is the epitome. It pervades his body (Upaka's recognition of his appearance), his speech (the pure *dhamma* with which he will combat the impure *dhamma*), and his mind (his pure comprehension of the four noble truths which led to his enlightenment). This condition of being pure is signified and protected by his separation from defiling agents. It is also implicitly acknowledged in his status. He is worthy of homage and gifts because he is separate and pure.

The enlightenment experience, at least as it is presented in the frame narrative, is absolutely dependent upon this condition of purity. If, as I am arguing, the *Vinaya* represents the embodiment of this experience in the corporate identity of the *sangha*, purity is absolutely necessary for it as well. Concomitantly, the condition of impurity must be kept separate, not only from the Buddha, but also from his sphere of enlightenment, the *sangha*.

As the opposite of purity, the concept of impurity implies a state of being entangled, attached, connected. In short, it implies the emotional, physical, and social network in which normal folk are embedded. To attain enlightenment (or join the *sangha*), one must distance oneself, separate oneself, disentangle oneself from this messy web of relations. One must view the workings of causality from outside, not from

within.³⁵ This outsider's view can be obtained by joining the sangha and following the rules of Vinaya ("that which separates"), by, in other words, becoming an insider within the boundaries of the Buddha's enlightenment.

This analysis is confirmed by the story of Yasa's renunciation which immediately follows the Buddha's conversion of the group of five. Delicately reared, privilege to all the luxuries of wealth and status, Yasa falls asleep one night in the company of female musicians. He awakens before them and, seeing them in disarray with their instruments draped around them, their hair dishevelled, saliva dripping from their mouths, muttering in their sleep, he recognizes in them the personification of a cemetery (*Mahāvagga* I 7.1-2). This vision has a powerful effect on him. He comprehends the danger (*ādīnava*) attendant with sensual pleasures and experiences a profound disgust (*nibbidā*).³⁶ He then utters a solemn utterance (*udāna*), "Truly this is distress (*upadduta*), truly this is affliction (*upassatṭha*)!" Yasa spontaneously decides

³⁵Significantly, the only details about the content of the Buddha's enlightenment described in the opening sequences of the frame narrative consist of his viewing the workings of *paṭiccasamuppāda* in forward and reverse order.

³⁶This type of disgust (*nibbidā*), the concomitant of "seeing things the way they really are" (*yathābhūta*) is a preliminary state of mind for the attainment of *nibbāna* (PED, sv. *nibbidā*). The implication is that human beings are caught in a web of bondage by desire. When we realize that the objects of our desires are not really or abidingly appealing, we develop *nibbidā*, a sense of disgust necessary for overcoming our desires. Here, Yasa sees the "true" state of his musicians, though they appeared very attractive prior to his "awakening".

to renounce, leaves the house and the city, meets up with the Buddha, and attains the *dhammacakkhu* immediately after hearing the *dhamma*. In this case, the Buddha knows the mind of Yasa so he teaches him the more advanced *dhamma* usually reserved for those who have been ordained.³⁷

The Buddha does this, I suggest, because Yasa has already purified himself. With his attainment of disgust, Yasa assumes a perspective outside the entrapments of the household life. Upon viewing the disarray of the women, Yasa had seen in them the extreme danger of sensual pleasures that lead inevitably to the cemetery; he "wakes up" (*paṭibujjhati*, a verbal form of *buddha*). Yasa recognizes the artificial nature of sensual pleasures and the futility of grasping after them by assuming a perspective outside the network of relations in which sensual pleasures are embedded. This is symbolized by the messy entanglements of the musicians with their instruments and each other. The disgusting nature of sensual pleasures and their impurity is symbolized by the dishevelled hair and the saliva. The lack of control attendant with

³⁷*sāmukkamsikā dhammadesanā*, the "exalted *dhamma*-talk". The Buddha grants Yasa this more advanced lesson after he has provided the "progressive talk" (*anupubbikatha*). The progressive talk includes subjects such as giving (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), heaven (*sagga*), the problems with sensual pleasures (*kāma*), and the benefits of renouncing them (*Mahāvagga* I 7.5). The exalted talk involves explanation of the four noble truths, suffering (*dukkha*), its origins (*samudaya*), its cessation (*nirodha*), and the path (*magga*). The distinction between these two types of talks is clear. While the former is a basic introduction to Buddhist doctrine appropriate for householders, the latter is much more advanced, appropriate for renunciants.

entanglement in the realm of sensual pleasures is similarly conveyed. Finally, Yasa's detached perspective enables him to see death in the sleep of the musicians. By entangling themselves, sleeping in impurity, and exerting no control over themselves, the musicians are consigning themselves to the cemetery.

Having experienced this shift in his perception, Yasa cannot remain in the mansion but must separate himself physically as he has separated himself psychologically from the entanglements in which he was embedded. Significantly for our analysis, he must also leave the city. The entanglements of *samsāra*, symbolized so vividly in the description of the sleeping musicians, are bounded by the city gates.

Meanwhile, back at the mansion, Yasa's mother is worried at his absence. His father sets out to find him, but the Buddha employs his psychic powers to render him invisible. The Buddha then teaches Yasa's father, who quickly attains the *dhammacakkhu* and asks for refuge in the Buddha, the *dhamma* and the *bhikkhu-sangha*, thus becoming the first *upasaka* to take the "triple refuge" (*Mahāvagga* I 7.10).³⁸ Yasa becomes an *arahant* while the Buddha instructs his father. The Buddha

³⁸*āhaṃ bhante bhagavantam saraṇam gacchāmi dhammaṃ ca bhikkhusanghaṃ ca.* Note that this "triple refuge" assumes the institution of the *sangha*. This confirms my contention that the ordination of the group of five marks the creation of the *sangha*. Now that there are ordained *bhikkhus*, the "double refuge" taken by the Buddha's first *upāsakas* (the merchants who fed him) can be modified to the triple formula which appears commonly throughout Buddhist sources.

then annuls the invisibility of Yasa and his father asks him to return, describing how Yasa's mother is afflicted with grief at his absence. The Buddha explains to Yasa's father how much greater the vision is of Yasa now that he is an *arahant* and how he cannot return to the low life (*hīnāyāvatta*). Newly attaining the perspective of the *dhamma*, albeit with only a "learner's knowledge" (*sekhena nāṇena*), Yasa's father concedes that Yasa cannot return as he has relinquished grasping for the *āsavas* (*anupādāya āsava*, *Mahāvagga* I 7.14). Yasa then seeks ordination and becomes the first *bhikkhu* converted from a householder's lifestyle (*Mahāvagga* I 7.15).

In the next section of the narrative, the Buddha and Yasa go to Yasa's former household for a meal. The Buddha preaches *dhamma* and accepts Yasa's mother and former wife as *upāsikās* (*Mahāvagga* I 8.1-4). Subsequent sections detail the renunciation and consequent enlightenment of fifty-four of Yasa's friends (*Mahāvagga* I 9-10). The episode concludes with the assessment that there are now sixty-one *arahants* in the world (the Buddha, the group of five, Yasa, and his fifty-four converts, *Mahāvagga* I 10.4).

This story of Yasa's conversion is very important. Yasa, not the Buddha, functions as a paradigm for the renunciation of "normal folk". It is as a direct result of his ordination that the Buddha and the *sangha* can assume their usual activities in joining the laity for meals, preaching the *dhamma*, and acquiring both lay and renunciant converts: it is Yasa's

immediate family who hosts the meal; Yasa's father who becomes the first *upasaka* to take the triple refuge; Yasa's mother and former wife who become the first *upāsikās*; Yasa and his friends who become the first householders to renounce the world.

The Buddha's prior converts, the group of five, cannot function as paradigms as they are already ascetics. They cannot symbolize "leaving home for the homeless life" as they have no home to leave. In our analysis, they are already outside the boundaries of the city. Yasa, however, does leave home, he does exit the city gates, he does act as model and bring support and prestige to the *sangha*.³⁹

Similarly, the Buddha is not a paradigm of renunciation in the Pali *Vinaya*, though he functions as such in other biographies.⁴⁰ He is not a model of how to renounce the world, but is the substance of the goal of renunciation. The Buddha is not to be emulated; he is to be embodied. This embodiment is manifest in the *sangha*. In this particular expression of the Buddha biography, the person of the Buddha, his *bodhi*-sphere, is extended to encompass the corporate

³⁹He also leaves the realm of women, but I will discuss this below.

⁴⁰See for example the *Buddhacarita* or the biography in the *Mahāvastu* where the early life and renunciation of the Buddha are developed and emphasized much more than in this account. In these biographies, Siddhartha (the Buddha before he attains *nibbāna*) has the vision of the sleeping women here attributed to Yasa. Like Yasa, it is this vision that prompts the Buddha to leave home and city, thus beginning his renunciant career.

entity of the *sangha*.

By the end of the Yasa story the *sangha* is firmly established, sporting sixty-one *arahants*, wealthy *upāsakas*, *upāsikās*, and a reputation that encourages householders to join. A final episode, however, is needed to confirm the status of the *sangha*. Now that the Buddha has expanded the boundaries of his enlightenment to include numerous *bhikkhus*, and has explained the *dhamma* in full to them, he disperses them, saying,

Free am I, monks, from all snares, both those which come from divine sources and those which come from human sources. You, monks, are also freed from all snares, both divine and human. Go, monks, on tour for the benefit of the manyfolk, for the happiness of the manyfolk, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the benefit, the happiness of the gods and human beings. Let not two of you go the same way. Teach the *dhamma*, monks, which is lovely in the beginning, lovely in the middle, and lovely at the end. Explain in spirit and in detail the *brahmacariya* which is perfectly pure and entirely fulfilled. There are some beings who are languishing from not hearing the *dhamma*, yet lack defilements and are capable of learning it (*Mahāvagga* I 11.1).⁴¹

Māra, the supernatural being known for tempting the Buddha, then appears and challenges the Buddha's claim to freedom from all snares. The Buddha refutes him, and Māra, realizing that

⁴¹*mutt' āhaṃ bhikkhave sabbapāsehi ye dibbā ye ca mānsā. tumhe pi bhikkhave muttā sabbapāsehi ye dibbā ye ca mānūsā. caratha bhikkhave cārikāṃ bahujaṇahitāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ. mā ekena dve agamittha. desetha bhikkhave dhammaṃ ādikalyāṇaṃ majjhekalyāṇaṃ pariyośānakalyāṇaṃ sātthaṃ savyāñjanaṃ kevalaparipuññaṃ parisuddhaṃ brahmacariyaṃ pakāsetha. santi sattā pparijakkhājātikā assavanatā dhammassa parihāyanti, bhavissanti dhammassa aññātāro. ahaṃ pi bhikkhave yena Uruvelā yena Senānigamo ten' upasaṅkamissāmi dhammadesanāyā 'ti.*

he is recognized, disappears (*Mahāvagga* I 11.2).

This, the final episode in the frame narrative, represents for us the final confirmation of the symbolic expansion of the personal sphere of the Buddha onto the *sangha*. Just as the Buddha is completely devoid of attachments, so is the *sangha*. Just as the Buddha travels from tree to tree, extending the geographical presence of his enlightenment experience, so he disperses the *sangha* in all directions.⁴² Just as the Buddha extends the social parameters of his enlightenment by preaching the *dhamma*, so does he compel his *bhikkhus* to preach. Just as the Buddha is convinced to teach by the existence of some beings without defilements, so does he convince his *sangha*. Just as the Buddha's enlightenment is marked by the last temptation of Māra,⁴³ so is his mandate to

⁴²Significantly, in both textual sources and in inscriptions, the term *cātudisa sangha* (the *sangha* of the four directions) is used to designate the *sangha* in its entirety. This geographical metaphor apparently had wide currency from an early date in Buddhism. In his classic study, Sukumar Dutt interprets this designation as indication of an early itinerant stage of the *sangha*, arguing that originally monks did not live in dwellings but travelled constantly. *Early Buddhist Monachism* (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1957), p. 13. For a stringent critique of Dutt's theory, see Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, pp. 6-10.

⁴³In the account of his enlightenment experience which opens the *Mahāvagga* frame narrative, Māra is vanquished in the third and final watch of the night (*Mahāvagga* I 1.7). In other accounts of the Buddha's biography, the conquest of Māra plays an elaborate and significant role. For a discussion and references to Māra in Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources, see E.J. Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha: As Legend and History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), pp. 70-80, 230-233, etc.; James Boyd, *Satan and Māra: Christian and Buddhist Symbols of Evil* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975); and Alex Wayman, "Studies in Yama and Māra" (*Indo-Iranian Journal* 3 [1959]:

the *sangha* marked by the appearance and conquest of Māra.

By the end of this frame narrative the *sangha* is firmly established as fully incorporated within the boundaries of the Buddha's enlightenment. It receives a mandate from the Buddha to represent him before the outside world. The identity of the Buddha as an enlightened being merges completely with that of the *sangha*. The Buddha's purity in body, speech, and mind also characterizes the *sangha* which, at this point in the narrative chronology, contains a membership comprised entirely of *arahants*. Their bodies travel to expand the *dhamma*, they speak the same *dhamma*, and their minds are completely lacking in attachment. They are utterly separate from the condition of normal folk and are subject to the same kind of homage as that received by the Buddha. Their status has become completely transformed. In assuming the identity of the Buddha, the identity of the *sangha* has become characterized by the same tripartite foundation of purity, separation, and hierarchy.

The identity of the outside world has also been established by the frame narrative as the realm of entanglement, suffering, and death. Though the world is by nature impure, some people are capable of acquiring purity, and others are accepted as supporters of the *sangha*. To become a supporter, however, is to implicitly recognize the status and existential

otherness of the *sangha*.⁴⁴ To be maintained, the boundary between the *sangha* and the outside world must remain clear. As we have seen, this boundary functions to separate the pure from the impure and consists of the recognition by outsiders of the status of the Buddha in his interactions with all types of beings.

Embodying the Boundaries: A Masculine Model

As an analytical framework, this tripartite foundation works, I believe, to describe the process by which the parameters of the Buddha's person are extended to encompass the corporate identity of the *sangha*. In incorporating features of the Buddha's enlightenment, however, the redactors of the *Vinaya* have also incorporated his maleness. The insider/ outsider, pure/impure divisions demarcated by the boundaries we have analyzed thus far also include a male/female dimension. The *sangha*, created, defined, and confirmed in the frame narrative is exclusively male. Though other passages in Pali literature clearly depict a two-fold structure to the *sangha* (*bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*) and four assemblies (*bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, *upāsakas*, and *upāsikās*),⁴⁵

⁴⁴See for example how Yasa's mother is impressed by seeing him as an attendant of the Buddha (*Mahāvagga* I 8.4). Normally a servile role, in this case, his attendance is an increase in status.

⁴⁵See for example the famous passage in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* where the Buddha refuses to die until all four categories are promulgating the true *dhamma* effectively. Also, in the equally famous account of the pre-eminent

this narrative details the origins of only three. *Bhikkhunis* are the only category omitted in the narrative.

All the beings encountered by the Buddha and included in his circle are male. Women do not appear in the account until the conversion of Yasa. Then, they symbolically represent the world of entanglement from which Yasa must extricate himself. It is in seeing women in their dishevelled condition that Yasa develops the perspective that entitles him to special treatment by the Buddha. It is in women that delusion, death and suffering are most evident. And it is the women who remain asleep while Yasa "wakes up".

Significantly, it is also a woman who resists Yasa's decision to renounce. Yasa's father comes to get him, but only upon the request of his mother. Because he is under her influence, the Buddha must hide Yasa from him until he has been instructed in the *dhamma* and thereby purified himself to attain the *dhammacakkhu*. Yasa's mother and former wife become *upāsikās*, but the text does not dwell on the details of their conversion.

This is a clear contrast with the narrative emphasis on the conversion of the Buddha's first *upāsakas*, the merchants and Yasa's father. The merchants are among the first contacts with the Buddha after his enlightenment. They share this distinction with a *brahman*, a *nāga* king, the *catuddisa* kings,

characteristics of the Buddha's closest followers, the Buddha treats all four categories separately (A I 1-25).

and Brahmā himself. Moreover, in presenting the development from their request for a two-fold refuge (in the Buddha and the *dhamma*) to Yasa's father's request for the three-fold refuge (in the Buddha, the *dhamma*, and the *sangha*), the narrative stresses the importance of *upāsakas*. Finally, in the conversion of Yasa's father, the narrative explains in detail the content of the Buddha's lecture that leads to the conversion. No details are provided to explain why Yasa's mother and former wife not only accept his decision to renounce, but actively embrace the teachings.

In this narrative, women appear almost as an afterthought. They are clearly not permitted within the boundaries of the Buddha's enlightenment and are only reluctantly accepted as *upāsikās* outside it. This stands as a clear parallel to the treatment of Mahāpajāpatī in the story of women's ordination. Tacked onto the end of the *Cullavagga* almost as an afterthought, Mahāpajāpatī and the women she represents are accepted into the *sangha* only with great reluctance by the Buddha. As Mahāpajāpatī stands outside the physical parameters of the *sangha*, women in this narrative stand outside the symbolic parameters.

We see therefore that the self-definition implicit in the frame narrative is defined as much by maleness as by purity and awareness. Women are circumscribed as outsiders. They function as objects of meditation, not as potential converts; they symbolize the world of entrapment and defilement, not the

possibility of transformation. Women, in short, are identified very closely with the world renouncers renounce. Thus, women's ordination will pose a serious problem for those who assimilate the self-identity implicit in the frame narrative. I do not think it is an accident that *bhikkhunīs* are excluded in the frame narrative which details the origins, characteristics, and mandate of the *sangha*. In symbolically embodying the Buddha, the *sangha* also embodies his maleness.

CHAPTER III

Communal Boundaries:

Identity in the *Khandhakas*

The masculine model articulated by the Buddha biography which opens the *Mahāvagga* is refined and developed throughout the rest of the *Khandhakas* which follow. The *Khandhakas*, consisting of the *Mahāvagga* ("the larger section") and the *Cullavagga* ("the smaller section"), are concerned exclusively with the rules, regulations, and procedures that pertain to the *sangha* as a whole. They define and delimit the administration and protocol of the *sangha* as a corporate body.

The *Khandhakas* dictate features of communal life not specified in the *Suttavibhanga*. They articulate in great detail, with consideration of almost every contingency, the procedures, requirements, and ramifications of every aspect of the *sangha's* business: from the admission and training of new members, to the ways in which donations are accepted and distributed, the guidelines for handling disputes over *dhamma* and *Vinaya*, and the major ritual events of the *sangha*. Furthermore, the *Khandhakas* prescribe the lifestyle and appearance of individual *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* insofar as they represent the *sangha* to the supporting lay-followers. The

Khandhakas thus develop a portrait of the ideal *sangha*, including how it should appear, how it should administer itself, how it should deal with its problems, and how it should relate to the outside world.

The *Khandhakas* have been treated by scholars as an extension of the *Suttavibhanga*, which, they claim, predates the *Khandhakas*: many of the rules of the *Suttavibhanga* are assumed in rulings of the *Khandhakas*.¹ In general, with regard to the relationship between the texts, we can say that while the *Suttavibhanga* defines certain individual behaviours as offenses and articulates the relative gravity of each offense, the *Khandhakas* stipulate what is to be done about an infraction: the procedures for discipline, the type of punishment, the conditions and procedures for rehabilitation.² The *Khandhakas* appear to consist, in part, of the administrative details omitted when the *Suttavibhanga* rules were created. Reflecting this, the *Suttavibhanga* precedes the

¹For example, after citing an extensive list of scholars, Jotiya Dhirasekera concludes, "The nature and scope of the contents of the *Pātimokkha* being so limited the *Khandhakas* had, of necessity, to take up the rest of monastic discipline from the very outset. Further, the contents of the *Suttavibhanga* being necessarily based on the text of the *Pātimokkha* admitted of no additions beyond that. On the other hand, the *Khandhakas* had to envisage and accommodate evolutionary changes. Thus the period of development of the whole of the *Khandhakas* must inevitably spread over a much longer period of time than that of the *Suttavibhanga*." *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 16-17.

²See in particular *Cullavagga* I, II, and III which address administrative procedures for dealing with offenses laid out in the *Pātimokkha*.

Khandhakas in the *Vinaya*.³

Conceptually, however, the *Khandhakas* take precedence over the *Suttavibhaṅga*. The *Suttavibhaṅga* details and prohibits for individual *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* behaviours deemed offensive, and provides an account of the circumstances of the first infraction of each offense.⁴ In so doing, however, the text assumes elements of communal life which are articulated in the *Khandhakas*. For example, the annual retreat during the rainy season (*vassa*) is frequently referred to in the *Suttavibhaṅga*. Yet, this retreat is instituted in *Mahāvagga* III. As we have seen in the last chapter, the *sangha* itself is instituted in the *Mahāvagga* as are the admission and ordination procedures which undergird the very designation of "*bhikkhu*" or "*bhikkhunī*".

Moreover, the *Pātimokkha* which is recited at the bi-monthly *uposatha* rite is introduced, apparently for the first time, in Chapter II of the *Mahāvagga* which describes the

³See I.B. Horner's discussion and citations in her introduction to the translation of the *Vinaya*, BD I, pp. vii-ix. *Vinayas* from other schools consistently begin with the *Suttavibhaṅga* and Buddhaghosa treats it first in his commentary. The Pali Text Society edition of the *Vinaya*, however, presents the *Khandhakas* (Vols. I and II) prior to the *Suttavibhaṅga* (Vols. III-V).

⁴Sometimes, however, the relationship between the explanatory story and the ruling it prompts is not clear. For example, the frame narrative for *bhikkhu Sanghādisesa* VI describes *bhikkhus* making excessive demands on their lay-supporters. When the Buddha hears of this, he rebukes the *bhikkhus* with three *Jātaka*-type tales, the moral of which is that those who ask too much end up with nothing. The ruling following this narrative, however, dictates appropriate means of measurement for the building of huts.

origins and procedures of the *uposatha*. Since the *Suttavibhanga* is essentially the "long version" of the *Pātimokkha*, it is, in a certain sense, also contained conceptually within the *Mahāvagga*. For these reasons, I treat the *Khandhakas* before I address the *Suttavibhanga*.

The communal dimension of the *sangha* also takes conceptual precedence over the individual in the context of my analysis. I argued in the last chapter that the *Vinaya's* biography of the Buddha represents the symbolic expansion of his *bodhi* to encompass the newly formed *sangha*. In this chapter, I develop this argument, applying the model of identity defined in the Buddha biography to the portrait of the ideal community conveyed by the *Khandhakas*. The *Khandhakas* describe a communal identity that, like that of the Buddha in his biography, is based on a foundation of purity, separation, and hierarchy. In the next chapter, I examine how this communal identity is appropriated in the vision of an ideal individual conveyed by the *Suttavibhanga*. My analysis thus flows from the most general (the transcendent sphere of enlightenment) to the most specific (the individual expression of that sphere).

There is consistency between these levels of analysis. The model identity of an enlightened being introduced in the biography of the Buddha is, I will argue, a paradigm both for the model community articulated by the *Khandhakas* and for the model renunciant portrayed in the *Suttavibhanga*. Slight

variations in emphasis, however, can be distinguished between these three models. In the biography, the emphasis is clearly on purity in body, speech, and mind. The concepts of separation and hierarchy are present, but they are not emphasized to the same degree. In the communal identity developed in the *Khandhakas*, the central concept is boundaries, the physical and symbolic demarcations between the renunciant community and the outside world. Purity and hierarchy are also crucial, but, in this model, it is boundaries that achieve a position of pre-eminence *vis-á-vis* the other concepts. Boundaries pervade every chapter of the *Khandhakas*, either explicitly with references to *sīmā*, the geographical limits that define the administrative parameters of a particular local *sangha*, or implicitly with images of separation and exclusion required for the official business and institutional image of the *sangha*. Significantly, the geographical boundaries (*sīmā*) are introduced in the second chapter of the *Mahāvagga* which is devoted to the *uposatha* ceremony, the bi-monthly ritual assertion of complete purity (*parisuddhi*)⁵ required of all *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* dwelling within a circumscribed area.

⁵Here and throughout the *Khandhakas* and *Suttavibhaṅga* the term "purity" (*parisuddhi*) is used to refer to the condition of being without offenses. As I argue below, however, the concept of purity continues to imply bodily containment, emotional and social detachment, and truthful speech as it did in the Buddha biography. I view the *Vinaya's* specific usage of "purity" as an example of its incorporation of the Buddha's *bodhi*: just as purity defines the existential state of being of an enlightened one, so does purity define the ideal renunciant (i.e., one who follows exactly the *Vinaya* code of behaviour and attitude).

In this rite, boundaries function to produce and maintain corporate and individual purity; they define who is to be considered a member of the *sangha*, and protect those members from defiling contact with non-members.

Boundaries are thus very important to the paradigm of identity developed in the *Khandhakas*. In the analysis that follows, I examine the role of boundaries, both geographical and symbolic, in creating and preserving communal identity. I begin with a section on admission, ordination, and the *uposatha* rite, which are presented as the Buddha's first official proclamations with regard to the corporate structure of the new *sangha*. In this first section, I analyze the role of physical, psychological and social boundaries in determining who is allowed admission into the *sangha* and granted full membership. In the second section, I summarize the role of boundaries throughout the rest of the administrative procedures articulated in the *Khandhakas*, arguing that boundaries function as a means of controlling individual members, unifying the *sangha*, and protecting its integrity. Finally, in the third section, I examine the impact on *bhikkhunīs* of the extreme emphasis on boundaries throughout the *Khandhakas*.

In my analysis of the *Khandhakas*, the exclusion of *bhikkhunīs* we discovered in the Buddha biography and the Mahāpajāpatī story becomes even more explicit. The masculinity assumed in embodying the boundaries of the Buddha's *bodhi*

becomes overt. Where women are simply omitted from the sphere of enlightenment in the narrative of the Buddha's biography and the origins of the *sangha*, in the *Khandhakas* women are actively excluded. Where *bhikkhunīs* are simply absent from the details of the origins of the differing assemblies, in the *Khandhakas's* discussions of *sangha*-administration *bhikkhunīs* are not only absent, but prohibited. Like non-renunciants, transgressors, and novices, *bhikkhunīs* must be outside the boundaries (*sīmā*) during *sangha* business meetings and ritual events. If they or any of these other "non-members" are present within the boundaries, the convened *sangha* cannot conduct its business: any business carried out in their presence is invalid.

In this chapter I argue that *bhikkhunīs* are not part of the corporate identity of the *sangha* as it is envisioned in the *Khandhakas*. Though accepted as members of the *sangha* (provisions are made for their upkeep and instruction), *bhikkhunīs* are systematically excluded, delegitimized, and silenced. They remain in a perpetual state of limbo, treated in the same way as male novices who have yet to attain full membership and male transgressors whose membership privileges are temporarily revoked. *Bhikkhunīs* thus occupy a very ambiguous role in the *sangha*. Neither fully a part of the *sangha*, nor fully separate from it, they represent a weakening of the structural integrity of the boundaries which define and protect the very identity of the *sangha*.

Creating Boundaries:

Admission, Ordination, and Uposatha

The corporate identity of the *sangha* is perhaps most evident in the major ritual events designated as the first official proclamations of the Buddha to his *sangha*, the *upasampadā* (ordination) and *uposatha* rites.⁶ As most scholars agree, these rituals are crucial to the self-definition of the *sangha*. *Upasampadā* is the ritual in which new members are accepted into the *sangha*; it is the point at which an individual assumes the community identity.⁷ *Uposatha* is the fortnightly gathering of all monastics to recite the *Pātimokkha*, the code of individual offenses. All members of the *sangha* are required to attend, confess any transgressions of the code, and affirm their purity. The ritual thus brings together the *sangha's* membership in a "ritualistic purge" of impurity.⁸

I address these rituals together because they both function, I believe, to define, create, and sustain group

⁶Here I am excluding the annual rituals following the rainy season retreat, the *pavāraṇā* ("invitation"), which closely resembles in format and function the ritual cleansing of the *uposatha*, and the *kathina* rite, the ritual donation of cloth from the laity which occurs at the end of the rainy season. I address these rituals in the next section.

⁷For a discussion of this rite of passage in relation to the theories of Arnold van Gennep and Mircea Eliade, see John Holt, *Discipline*, pp. 108-111.

⁸On the nature of this "purge" and its historical developments, see Jotiya Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 101.

identity. Both rituals are highly formalized and involve explicit boundaries which distinguish between insiders and outsiders. Likewise, both require of "insiders" a condition of complete purity which is enforced and preserved by a system of hierarchy. The rituals thus define and sustain the division between the renunciant community and the surrounding social world.

The *upasampadā* procedure is presented in the *Mahāvagga* as developing gradually over time. Initially informal and casual, the procedure consists of an ordinand shaving his hair and beard, donning the yellow robes, honouring a *bhikkhu's* feet, and professing his faith in the triple refuge (*Mahāvagga* I 12.1-4). The Buddha alone employs the "*ehi bhikkhu*" formula to ordain new converts,⁹ and he continues to use this formula after he has authorized his *bhikkhus* to ordain initiates on their own.

This soon poses problems, however, as the new *bhikkhus* behave improperly, "like *brahmans*" according to the townsfolk (*Mahāvagga* I 25.2). The Buddha institutes a preceptor-pupil relationship,¹⁰ stipulating seniority and mutual responsibility (*Mahāvagga* I 25.6-24).¹¹ This relationship of seniority

⁹See my translation and discussion above, p. 86.

¹⁰In Pali, the terms are *upajjhāya* (preceptor) *saddhivihārika* (co-resident, pupil).

¹¹Here, because of the emphasis in my analysis on hierarchy, I focus on the seniority implicit in this relationship. Other scholars concentrate more on the reciprocity mandated in the texts between preceptor (*upajjhāya*) and pupil (*saddhi-*

paves the way for a new system of ordination. The Buddha's next move is to abolish ordination by the triple refuge in favour of a formal act consisting of a three-fold motion and acceptance (*ñatticatutthakamma Mahāvagga I 28.3-6*). In this and all other formal acts, the motion is proposed by an experienced, competent *bhikkhu* (*vyattena bhikkhunā paṭibalena*) and acceptance indicated by silence in the convened *sangha*.

Various scenarios follow which produce increasing complexity in the ordination procedure. The four requisites are introduced,¹² with instructions on when to instruct the initiate in the use of them; a quorum of ten *bhikkhus* is instituted; a rule that the ordaining *bhikkhu* must have at least ten years standing is stipulated; and the office of teacher (*ācariya*) is formalized with detailed guidelines on the relationship between teacher and student (*Mahāvagga I 30-32*).

After these formal procedures, the text details the men who are not eligible for ordination: those who are diseased

vihārika, co-resident). Duties to care for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the other are incumbent on both parties. The relationship is like father and son (*Mahāvagga I 25.6*). See Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, pp. 137-140.

¹²The four requisites (*nissaya*) for *bhikkhus* are meals of left-overs, robes constructed of rags, dwelling at the foot of a tree, and ammonia for medicine. All of these are modified in favour of greater flexibility and leniency, but the four are to be the basic foundation of monastic life (*Mahāvagga I 30 and 77*). Significantly, for *bhikkhunīs* there are only three: the one omitted concerns dwelling at the foot of a tree. *Bhikkhunīs* are expressly forbidden from staying in the forest (*Cullavagga X 23*).

(*Mahāvagga* I 39.7); those in service to a king (40.4); a thief marked by a sign (*dhajabaddha cora* 41),¹³ wanted by authorities (42-3), or who has been punished (44); someone under twenty years of age (49); a eunuch (*paṇḍaka*, 61);¹⁴ a matricide (64); a parricide (65); one who has killed an arahant (66); a seducer of *bhikkhunīs* (67); a schismatic (67); one who has shed the blood (of a *Tathāgata*) (67);¹⁵ a hermaphrodite (*ubhatovyañjanaka*, 68); one without a preceptor (69); one without a bowl or robe (70); or someone with any kind of physical disability, ranging from loss of limbs, to birth defects, to old age (71).

After this long list, the text returns to the ordination procedure, specifying how initiates are to be questioned to

¹³This is an interesting inversion of the famous story of *Aṅgulimāla*, the thieving mass-murderer who joins the *sangha* and attains arahant-hood (MN Sutta 86 and *Theragāthā* 869-891). In the *Vinaya* reference to a similar (murdering?) thief, the Buddha introduces his prohibition to the admission of *dhajabaddha* thieves after the ordination of a thief (*cora*) described as wearing a garland of fingers (*aṅgulimāla*) whose presence in the *sangha* terrifies people. Here, the prohibition refers specifically to thieves marked by a sign (*dhajabaddha*; Horner translates this as "wearing an emblem" perhaps in reference to the garland).

¹⁴For a discussion of the elusive *paṇḍaka* and Buddhist theories of sexual differentiation, see Leonard Zwilling, "Homosexuality as Seen in Indian Buddhist Texts" (in *Buddhism, Sexuality and Gender* ed. by Jose Cabezon, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1992, pp. 203-214) and L.P.N. Perera, "Faculties of Sex and Related Phenomena in Buddhist Sexual Theory" (in *Buddhist Philosophy and Culture: Essays in Honour of N.A. Jayawickrama*, ed. by David Kalupahana and W.G. Weeratne, Sri Lanka: N.A. Jayawickrema Felicitation Volume Committee, 1987, pp. 179-188).

¹⁵I.B. Horner follows the commentary in assuming *Tathāgata* in a lacuna in the text (BD IV, p. 113 n. 2).

ensure they do not fall into any of these categories of exclusion, to make sure they understand the four requisites and are conversant with the four prohibitions (*akaraṇīya*, the four *Pārājika* offenses, *Mahāvagga* I 76-78).¹⁶ The Buddha then allows the re-ordination of a *bhikkhu* who had left the *sangha* but changed his mind (79).¹⁷

Clearly what we have in this set of procedures for ordination is a carefully prescribed boundary between those who are in and those who must be kept out. The main point of distinction for this boundary is image, the physical appearance of a candidate. If, as we have argued, the *sangha* is the corporate embodiment of the Buddha's *bodhi*, this makes sense. The purity, control, and power of that *bodhi* are clearly evident in every aspect of the Buddha including his body, his speech, and his mind.¹⁸ Accordingly, the body, speech, and mind of all *bhikkhus* must convey a similar image. Men who do not conform to this ideal are not admitted.

¹⁶The four *Pārājika* offenses for *bhikkhus* are: (1) sexual intercourse; (2) causing the death of a human being; (3) taking what is not given; (4) falsely proclaiming a high level of spiritual attainment. The *Pārājika* offenses require automatic expulsion for a transgressor. See the discussion below (pp. 165-170).

¹⁷Here we have another interesting departure from the rules for *bhikkhunīs*. *Bhikkhus* may chose to leave the *sangha* and return without losing status -- if they have committed an offence, their punishment picks up where it left off (*Mahāvagga* I 79; see also the long discussion in *bhikkhu Pārājika* I 8.2-4). *Bhikkhunīs*, however, cannot be re-ordained once they have left the *sangha* (*Cullavagga* X 26.1).

¹⁸See the discussion above, pp. 89-92.

This emphasis on image pervades the list of excluded types of persons. With the exception of the murderers, rapists and schismatics, all of the prohibited types of men are deemed unsuitable because of visible characteristics: the thief is not prohibited because he is a thief, but because he is marked; the absence of a finger or a limb (even a fingernail) is a visible disability. These qualities have nothing to do with soteriological capacities, but with physical appearance.¹⁹

This confirms my argument that the *Vinaya* as a whole is not primarily devoted to articulating the path to *nibbāna* but to designing a paradigmatic model of the identity of an

¹⁹Here my analysis departs significantly from that of other scholars, the majority of whom explain these excluded categories by referring to the pragmatic concerns of the *sangha* to retain the support of the laity. For example, I.B. Horner attributes the exclusions to the *sangha's* concern with the possibility of disgrace in the eyes of the laity (BD IV, p. xiv, see also Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, p. 121). This is certainly part of the rationale, but I do not think it explains the emphasis on appearance throughout the list. For example, thieves are not excluded because they are thieves, but because they are marked.

Following his emphasis on psychology, John Holt thinks the exclusions are based on a candidate's motivation, his moral background, and his physical capabilities (*Discipline*, p. 119). Unethical acts (murder, rape, promoting schism, etc.) in Holt's analysis reveal the candidate's questionable motives and undisciplined volition (p. 120). The physical aspects Holt explains as resulting from the *sangha's* emphasis on the individual's responsibility to work towards *nibbāna* individually: "the *bhikkhusangha* cannot act as a nursing home for the infirm" (p. 121). Here I think Holt has pushed his analysis to an untenable extreme. The text itself says nothing about motivation and volition but concentrates instead on physical characteristics. Similarly, the text devotes no attention to infirmity *per se*, but concentrates on physical appearance.

enlightened being. While other texts accept the ability of various types of individuals to attain *nibbāna*, the *Vinaya* excludes them from admission into the *sangha*. For example, the story of Aṅgulimāla, as it appears in non-*Vinaya* texts,²⁰ presents in no uncertain terms the ability of a mass-murdering thief to attain *nibbāna*. In these other texts, Aṅgulimāla is ordained in person by the Buddha. Moreover, the Buddha actively seeks him out to convert him against the advice of well-meaning townsfolk who fear for the Buddha's safety. In the *Mahāvagga* list of exclusions, the thief is explicitly designated "aṅgulimāla" (he who wears a garland of fingers). Clearly, the issue underlying the exclusion of thieves of this type is not their soteriological capabilities, but their appearance.²¹

Significantly, this appearance is controlled and directed by a systematic hierarchy. I find very interesting the emphasis on the relationship between preceptor-pupil and teacher-student in this section on ordination. In seeking ordination, an initiate learns not only the rules and guidelines for behaviour, but also a system of seniority. This system actually precedes the institution of the formal

²⁰See the references in note 13 above.

²¹Note how this pattern is replicated in the story of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination. In none of the extant versions of the story is her ability to attain *nibbāna* questioned. Rather, the tensions in the story revolve around her acceptability for admission into the *sangha*.

procedure of ordination.²² Moreover, the *Pārājika* offenses, for which expulsion is mandatory, are tacked on at the end of the section, almost as an afterthought. Clearly, hierarchy is as important to our redactor as appearance.

A concern for wholeness underlies these emphases. Wholeness of body is a requirement for ordination.²³ Men cannot be ordained whose bodily integrity is breached in any way, whether by disease, uncertain sexual characteristics,²⁴ or physical deformity. Their moral integrity must also be intact -- violence against parents, arahants, or a Buddha automatically disqualifies a candidate. And, their personal integrity involves a social dimension as well. Men bonded to the social world by ties to the army, to servitude, to

²²Again, my analysis departs from that of other scholars who understand this precedence as evidence for the increasing complexity in *sangha* administration which developed over time. Once *bhikkhus* were not ordained in person by the Buddha, their aptitude for the renunciant lifestyle is not assured. Hence the institution of a four month training period in between admission (*pabbajā*) and ordination (*upasampadā*). For a discussion, see I.B. Horner, BD IV, pp. xi-xiii.

²³I am indebted to Mavis Fenn for this insight into the importance of wholeness in the *Vinaya's* embodiment of the Buddha's person.

²⁴See the references in n. 14 above. A miraculous transformation of sexual characteristics poses no problem for Buddhaghosa. See, eg., the case of the *bhikkhu* who changed overnight into a *bhikkhunī*. His (her?) cell-mate incurred no transgression for sleeping in the presence of a woman and the new *bhikkhunī* retained her (his?) previous status though now applied to the *bhikkhunī-sangha* (*Samantapāsādikā*, pp. 211-212). It is the fuzzy areas between male and female that disturb Buddhaghosa, just as they appear to disturb our redactor. *Paṇḍakas* and hermaphrodites (*ubhatovyañjanaka*) are consistently excluded from any interaction with the *sangha*.

punitive retribution, or to filial obligation are not permitted entrance into the *sangha*.

This integrity is also evident in the emphasis on group cohesion. Not only must a candidate affirm his personal integrity, but, for a legally valid ordination, the *sangha* must also conform with an ideal of group solidarity. A quorum of ten *bhikkhus* indicates institutional acceptance of the candidate by silent approval. Thus, the wholeness of the individual corresponds with the wholeness of the institution which embodies the wholeness of the Buddha.

The requirement for institutional wholeness is even more obvious in the section on the *uposatha* rite which follows that on ordination. The *uposatha* occurs twice a month on the days of the full and new moon. It involves the gathering together of all *bhikkhus*²⁵ within a clearly demarcated area for the complete recitation of the *Pātimokkha*, the two hundred and twenty-seven rules contained in the *Suttavibhaṅga*, divided into seven categories of severity. Prior to the recitation, *bhikkhus* have had the opportunity to confess any transgression to each other, thereby purifying themselves of it. The *Pātimokkha* is recited by an experienced, competent (*vyatta paṭibala*) *bhikkhu* who lists the rules and inquires of the

²⁵The text of *Mahāvagga* II addresses only *bhikkhus*. *Bhikkhunīs* are also required to attend an *uposatha* rite of their own under the guidance of a designated *bhikkhu* (*Cullavagga* X 6.1), but their rite is clearly separate from that of the *bhikkhus*. I discuss the treatment of the *bhikkhunī-uposatha* rite below.

convened *sangha* if all are pure (*parisuddhi*) with regard to each category. When the *sangha* conveys its assent with silence, he affirms that complete purity is attained.

The *uposatha* rite thus represents symbolically the reaffirmation of *upasampadā*, required bi-monthly of all monastics. In coming together for what Jotiya Dhirasekera has termed a "ritualistic purge",²⁶ *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* reaffirm the purity, wholeness, separateness, and hierarchy they assumed when they became members of the *sangha*. On an individual level, *uposatha* represents a periodic review of one's conduct as a renunciant. On a communal level, *uposatha* actually binds the community together, affirming that the *sangha* is a united body.²⁷ These aspects pervade the *Mahāvagga* presentation of the *uposatha*.

In the frame narrative to this section, the Buddha is presented as concerned with the image of the *sangha*. King Bimbisāra approaches him, suggesting that as other sects gain support and converts with their *uposatha* rites, so should the *sangha*. The Buddha considers the matter and agrees, but does not institute the full recitation of *Pātimokkha* until people are critical of the *bhikkhus* for sitting in silence (*Mahāvagga* II 1-3). The full ritual as it evolves in the course of the

²⁶Jotiya Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 101.

²⁷Almost all scholars agree that this binding together of a disparate community is one of the primary functions of the *uposatha*. See, for example, Richard Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism*, p. 110.

section is replete with the symbolism of wholeness. The entire membership within a carefully bounded district must attend and declare their purity (*pārisuddhi*), excluding only those who have committed offenses or are mad.²⁸ Ill monks convey their purity by proxy (*Mahāvagga* II 22.1-2). The recitation itself must also be whole. It must include the full recital of all the rules in the *Pātimokkha*, though allowance is made for an abbreviated recital in situations of danger (*Mahāvagga* II 15.1-3).

Any breach of this wholeness invalidates the *uposatha*. Perhaps the most striking example of this is the case in which a *bhikkhu* is held by hostile relatives (or kings, or thieves, or brigands, etc.) within the boundary but is prevented from attending the assembly. In this case, the Buddha advises requesting the hostiles to allow the *bhikkhu's* attendance; asking them to stand aside while he conveys his purity; or convincing them to take him outside the boundary. If these attempts fail, the *sangha* cannot carry out the *uposatha* as it would be incomplete (*Mahāvagga* II 24.1-3).

The *uposatha* is likewise jeopardized by the presence of people whose status and membership is liminal. There is to be no recitation of the *Pātimokkha* in the presence of a *bhik-*

²⁸Like the rules for ordination, this section also prescribes a minimum quorum of *bhikkhus* required to observe the *uposatha*. In this case, there must be a minimum of four to recite the *Pātimokkha*. Three or less must simply declare their purity to each other on the *uposatha* day (*Mahāvagga* I 26).

khunī, probationer (*sikkhamāna*), novice (*sāmanera* or *sāmaneri*), or before one who has disavowed training, committed an extreme offense, or is under suspension (*Mahāvagga* II 36.1-2). Nor is the *Pātimokkha* to be recited before any of the types of persons disqualified from ordination (36.3). Earlier the text had prohibited recitation in front of a lay person (*Mahāvagga* II 16.8).

We see from this a clear concern with wholeness and exclusion. The corporate integrity of a *sangha* must be kept intact. No possibility of defiling agents or disruptive influence is allowed. It is for this purpose that this section on the *uposatha* rite places such a high priority on the physical boundaries defining the limits of a *sangha* that must convene bi-monthly to recite the *Pātimokkha*. After stipulating that *bhikkhus* are to gather for the *uposatha*, the Buddha immediately institutes the requirements for boundaries (*sīmā Mahāvagga* II 5-7 and 12-13).²⁹

The *sangha* is thus to be absolutely separate, perfectly pure, fully complete, and well-controlled. This control is achieved by the system of seniority. The identity and status of the *bhikkhu* who convenes the *sangha* and performs the recitation is important. This *bhikkhu* is to be experienced

²⁹These boundaries are also important for the legal procedures of the *sangha* in disciplining or rehabilitating individual *bhikkhus* and resolving disputes between them. For any of the formal acts to be legally valid, the entire *sangha* within a bounded area must be physically present (*Cullavagga* I).

and competent (*vyatta paṭibala*) and the *sangha* conveys its purity in silence. It is an offense for a *bhikkhu* to conduct the recital without the approval of the *sangha*. The recitation must be announced and supervised by an elder (*therādhika*, *Mahāvagga* II 15.5-7, 16.9, 19), except when the elder is incompetent (17.1-2). Interestingly, when boundaries are disputed between two residences, they are told to gather wherever the elder is (11).

These geographical boundaries, the *sīmā*, play a vital role in the *Vinaya*'s conception of the ideal identity of the *sangha*. In the demarcation of these boundaries, the *Vinaya* distinguishes between the administrative purview of limited, autonomous, local *sanghas* (*Sammukhībhūta-sangha*, the "face-to-face" *sangha*) and the universality of the *Cātuddisasangha* ("*sangha* of the four directions"), the transcendent ideal *sangha*. It is the *Cātuddisasangha* that truly embodies the Buddha. As Akira Hirakawa concludes:

The *Pātimokkha* was laid down by the Buddha, but when he passed away the maintainer of the *Pātimokkha* was lost. The *Sangha* had to become the successor to the Buddha. But the *Sammukhībhūta-sangha* could not become the successor, because it had to obey the rules of the *Pātimokkha*. The *Pātimokkha* was held to be prior to the *Sammukhībhūta-sangha*. On the Buddha's passing away, it was determined that the *Cātuddisasangha* should be the Representative of the *Pātimokkha*.³⁰

Just as individual *bhikkhus* are held accountable for their purity to a larger body, the *Sammukhībhūta-sangha*, so is this

³⁰Akira Hirakawa, "The Two-fold Structure of the Buddhist Sangha" (*Journal of the Baroda Institute* 16 [1966]: 131-137), p. 136 as cited in John Holt, *Discipline*, p. 129.

limited *sangha* held accountable to an encompassing ideal, the ideal of the Buddha's *bodhi* embodied by the *Cātuddisasangha*. The parameters of accountability remain the same: the individual's purity in body, speech, and mind is scrutinized during the *uposatha* rite by the entire assembly of *bhikkhus* which is required to join together with their bodies, chant the rules together with their voices, and examine with their minds the truthfulness of their declaration of purity.³¹ In this, they replicate the actions, speech, and thoughts of the Buddha after his enlightenment experience. Significantly, as we have seen, the Buddha's first actions are to extend the sphere of his *bodhi* in the four directions.³²

Now we are in a position to understand the extreme emphasis on physical appearance conveyed in the procedures for *upasampadā*. The physical boundaries of the individual *bhikkhu* must be structurally intact, just as the geographical boundaries of the *Sammukhībhūta-sangha* must be intact. Any breach at the micro level (the individual) produces a breach at the communal level (the local *sangha*) which breaches the transcendent level (the universal *sangha*). The boundaries thus define and preserve the very identity of the *bhikkhu*, the local *sangha*, and the universal *sangha*. To be a *bhikkhu* in this model is to be perfectly pure with respect to body, speech,

³¹I am indebted to John Holt (*Discipline*, p. 130) for this analysis of the unity of body, speech, and mind in the recital of the *Pātimokkha*.

³²See the discussion above, pp. 75-79.

and mind, fully separate from physical, social, and psychological bonds, and unquestioningly compliant with one's place in the hierarchical schema within the *sangha*.

Governing Boundaries: The Administration of the *Sangha*

These emphases on purity, separation, and hierarchy are sustained in the *Khandhakas*' discussions of the procedures and protocol which apply to the administration of the *sangha*. In general, these administrative concerns are threefold: the annual rainy season retreat (*vassa*) and its concluding rituals (*pavāraṇā* and *kāṭhina*); the judgement, discipline, and rehabilitation of *bhikkhus* who commit offenses; and the means by which disputes can be handled to avoid schism.³³ In the following discussion I summarize very briefly these features of *sangha* administration, concentrating on patterns of similarity with the main components of *upasampadā* and *uposatha*.

As we should expect by now, the annual rituals of the *sangha* (the *vassa* retreat and its conclusion in the *pavāraṇā*

³³Here I am omitting the sections of the *Khandhakas* which address the daily life in the *sangha*: types of materials prohibited for the construction of footwear (*Mahāvagga* V); food and medicine allowed (*Mahāvagga* VI); number of robes allowed, the robe-material and procedures for sewing them (*Mahāvagga* VIII); bathing, ornamentation, and nudity (*Cullavagga* V); and details concerning the types of buildings allowed in a *vihāra*, their construction and materials, etc. (*Cullavagga* VI). Interesting as these details may be, as a whole, they are not directly relevant to my argument. For a summary and discussion of these types of rules, see Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*.

rite) are instituted to confirm the *sangha's* identity. The Buddha is convinced to institute the vassa retreat at the prompting of lay-folk's criticism. Surely, they say, if other sects, whose *dhamma* is misproclaimed (*durakkhāta*) avoid travelling during the rains, so should the *sangha* (*Mahāvagga* III 1.1-3). The Buddha concedes and sets up a prescription for all *bhikkhus* to enter a retreat for three of the four months of the rains. *Bhikkhus* are allowed to leave this retreat only if they can guarantee return within seven days (*Mahāvagga* III 5.4, 5.8-11.13).³⁴ The annual retreat, therefore, closely associates the *sangha* with other ascetic groups and confirms an individual *bhikkhu's* membership in the *sangha*.

However, the *pavāraṇā* ceremony is prompted by the Buddha's concern to distinguish his *sangha* from the followers of other sects. In response to one group opting for silence over the vassa retreat to avoid personal conflict, the Buddha prohibits silence and institutes a ritual of invitation by *bhikkhus* in which they invite their colleagues to criticize their conduct over the season of the retreat (*Mahāvagga* IV 1). This allows a ritual airing of complaints and a context for making amends. Very similar to the ritual purification of the

³⁴In these cases of allowable travel, several involve *bhikkhus* providing services for *bhikkhunis*: to supervise buildings (5.8), tend an ill *bhikkhuni* (6.1), perform doctrinal counselling or impose discipline (6.12-20), and to intercede against possible schism among *bhikkhunis* (11.10-13). Though institutionally silenced and powerless, the *bhikkhuni-sangha* commands the same treatment as family members and other marginal groups within the *sangha* (novices, those under suspension, etc.).

uposatha, the *pavāraṇā* is conducted on the basis of seniority under the supervision of an experienced, competent *bhikkhu*. It must include the entire *sangha* that convened for the rains, and cannot be conducted in the presence of prohibited types of people (*Mahāvagga* IV 2-14).

The emphasis on boundaries we discovered in both the *uposatha* and the *upasampadā* rituals is paramount here. The types of people prohibited from *upasampadā* and *uposatha* recitations (a *bhikkhunī*, probationer, novice, or before one who has disavowed training, committed an extreme offense, or is under suspension) are also excluded from the *pavāraṇā* (*Mahāvagga* IV 7-14). Significantly, the *bhikkhus* "invite" in order of seniority, asking for criticism on what was seen, heard, or suspected of their behaviour (*Mahāvagga* IV 1.14). Functionally equivalent to the *uposatha*, this rite involves the examination of body (what is seen), speech (what is heard), and mind (what is suspected). Like both the *uposatha* and the *upasampadā*, the *sangha* must be complete for the *pavāraṇā* and it cannot be conducted in the presence of the types of people prohibited from *uposatha*.

Similarly, these persons cannot be counted to complete a quorum required of formal disciplinary proceedings of the *sangha* (*Mahāvagga* IX 4.2-5).³⁵ Nor can they launch a valid

³⁵This section of the *Mahāvagga* articulates the procedures allowable to *sanghas* consisting of differing numbers of *bhikkhus*. For example, while a *sangha* of four *bhikkhus* can accomplish all acts except ordination, invitation, and rehabilitation, a *sangha* of ten can do all except rehabili-

protest in the midst of the *sangha* (*Mahāvagga* IX 4.7). Though many of these people are full members of the *sangha*, they have no institutional voice. Significantly, as we shall discuss below, this group includes fully ordained *bhikkhunīs* of good standing.

The emphasis on wholeness is also pervasive. Just as the *sangha* must be complete for *upasampadā*, *uposatha*, and *pavāraṇā*, so must it be complete for other kinds of disciplinary proceedings.

We see, therefore, throughout the *Khandhakas* a consistent emphasis on issues of inclusion and exclusion, wholeness or completeness, and leadership or seniority. These issues are clearly allied with the tripartite structure I see as forming the conceptual foundation of the *Vinaya's* model of identity. Separation is the obvious motive for the categories of excluded types of persons and is marked by the physical, social, and psychological boundaries itemized in the texts. Similarly, purity underlies the emphasis on wholeness. A *bhikkhu* cannot be pure if he is not whole; a *sangha* cannot declare its purity if it is incomplete. Transgressions against the rules violate the boundaries and, thereby, threaten the integrity of the group. They must be guarded against. Hierarchy is the mechanism by which boundaries are established and violations addressed.

tation. A *sangha* of twenty is institutionally complete and can conduct any item of business.

The consequences of transgression provide interesting confirmation of the prevalence of this tripartite foundation. A *bhikkhu* who breaks the rules is, by definition, impure. Because he is impure, he cannot take part in the communal life of the *sangha*: he cannot be greeted respectfully; he cannot sleep under the same roof with regular *bhikkhus*; he loses all seniority and must give up his seat or sit lower than regular *bhikkhus*; he cannot pace with regular *bhikkhus* (*Cullavagga* II 1.1-4 and throughout). He is thus excluded from corporate membership in the *sangha*, albeit temporarily. He is separated from the *sangha*. He also loses his institutional voice. By virtue of his marginal status, he loses the right to ordain, to give guidance, to have novices, or to exhort *bhikkhunīs* (*Cullavagga* I 5 and throughout). His seniority is revoked.

As a transgressor, therefore, he inverts the model identity of the *bhikkhu*. He is impure, must be kept separate, and is placed in a position of inferiority *vis-à-vis* "good" *bhikkhus*. These consequences of transgression illustrate the mutual interdependence of the terms of our tripartite formula: purity is the defining characteristic of members of the *sangha*; separation is the means by which purity is established and expressed; and hierarchy is the mechanism for setting the boundaries of separation but is, itself, established by the condition of purity. It is a very neat, self-contained system.

The system is also, to a certain extent, limited by the

boundaries of the *Sammukhībhūta-sangha*. The administration of local affairs is basically autonomous, though this autonomy is the source of considerable tension in the texts. Throughout the *Khandhakas*, we find reference to "different communions" (*nānāsaṅvāsaka*) of *bhikkhus*.³⁶ Sometimes the texts simply refer to other communions, stipulating without prejudice the administrative procedures for relating to them. In these cases the term seems to imply only that *bhikkhus* dwelling within a certain boundary must conform with the ritual and administrative procedures specific to that locale. Individuals may join or leave, but districts remain basically autonomous. A clear example of this is the Buddha's relaxation for the Avantī region of the quorum of ten for ordination and rules for sandals, bathing practices, and robes (*Mahāvagga* V 13). These rules are unrealistic for the specific needs of the region, so the Buddha modifies them, in effect creating a "different communion" for which the regular rules do not apply.

Not all of the references to these other communions, however, are so harmonious. Very frequently, the texts intimate or explicitly describe the doctrine of these others

³⁶For example, *Mahāvagga* II 34-35 stipulates that *bhikkhus* should not observe the *uposatha* together with those of a different communion. Similarly, *bhikkhus* from a different communion cannot make up a quorum, voice a valid protest (*Mahāvagga* IX 4.2-8), or cause a schism (*Cullavagga* VII 5.1). A *bhikkhu* undergoing discipline cannot travel with those from a different communion (*Cullavagga* II 1.2), and, as long as the other is a senior of a different communion who speaks *dhamma*, he must be greeted respectfully (*Cullavagga* VI 6.5).

as *adhamma*. For example, *bhikkhus* undergoing discipline are to greet senior members of other communions if they speak *dhamma*, but not if they speak *adhamma* (*Cullavagga* VI 6.5).³⁷ In the section on the *bhikkhus* of Kosambī, the Buddha defines these "other communions" (*Mahāvagga* X 1.10). A *bhikkhu* can choose to belong to a different communion, or, if he is suspended by a complete *sangha*, he automatically becomes part of a different communion. We see from this that a "different communion" may consist of a group of *bhikkhus* temporarily suspended by a legal act of a complete *sangha*.

As long as the procedures are followed, however, the acts of those other communions are legally valid (*Mahāvagga* X 1.9). An interesting test of this occurs in the Devadatta story (*Cullavagga* VII). Devadatta, the archetypal villain in Buddhist literature, had openly challenged the Buddha, proposed himself as the Buddha's successor, plotted the Buddha's death, attempted himself to kill the Buddha, and gathered a group of five hundred around him who accepted his leadership and the authority of his five theses.³⁸ The Buddha

³⁷See also the situation in which the Buddha advises *bhikkhus* to go outside the border to hold their *pavāraṇā* when disputatious *bhikkhus* enter their territory at the end of the rains (*Mahāvagga* IV 17.3).

³⁸Devadatta proposed five measures as beneficial to attaining detachment and impressing the supporting laity with their austerity: (1) that *bhikkhus* should live only in the forest; (2) that they should feed themselves only on alms, refusing invitations to meals; (3) that they should dress only in rags, refusing gifts of robes; (4) that they should live in the open, never sleeping under a roof; and (5) that they should not eat fish and flesh, even if given as alms. The

sends Sāriputta and Moggallāna to reform these ill-advised *bhikkhus*. Sāriputta and Moggallāna are ultimately successful, but Sāriputta questions what to do with them now that they have rejoined the fold of the righteous. Should he re-ordain them? No, says the Buddha, though they should confess their grave offense in following a schismatic (*Mahāvagga* VII 4.4).

Here we have the ultimate test of the validity of an act of a different communion. Even though the *bhikkhus* were ordained by a schismatic, their ordination is recognized as valid. The emphasis in this case appears to be clearly slanted towards conformance with *Vinaya* guidelines. Because the procedures were followed, the ordination is valid. Even though these incipient schismatics follow a different doctrine, they remain within the rubric of Buddhist identity. *Vinaya*, not *dhamma*, defines what it means to be a Buddhist.³⁹

Buddha rejects outright Devadatta's proposals, stating that *bhikkhus* could choose to live in accordance with them, but that they should also be allowed a more moderate lifestyle.

³⁹Heinz Bechert argues persuasively that sects (*nikāyas*) are the result of different groups following a different *Pātimokkha*, not doctrinal disputes. Doctrinal disputes produce different schools (*vāda*) of Buddhism, but members of those schools could live communally within the same *sangha*; groups differing with regard to *Pātimokkha* could not dwell together. "Buddha-Field and Transfer of Merit in a Theravāda Source" (*Indo-Iranian Journal* 35 [1992]: 95-108). Other eminent scholars follow his assertion. See Richard Gombrich, "The Evolution of the *Sangha*" (*The World of Buddhism*, ed. by Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, London: Thames and Hudson, 1984, pp. 77-89), p. 82. In their very influential article, Janice Nattier and Charles Prebish provide significant substantiation for the role of *Vinaya* in sectarianism. "Mahā-sāṃghika Origins: The Beginnings of Buddhist Sectarianism"

Bhikkhus are left to their own discretion to choose among communions. The only criterion appears to be whether or not representatives speak *dhamma*.⁴⁰ There are, however, clear indications that hierarchy and lineage play a very important role. In the second council, *bhikkhus* from Vesālī promulgate ten points clearly contravening *Vinaya* rules. They end up in a dispute with a *bhikkhu*, Yasa, who convenes various representatives from *sanghas* in diverse geographical regions to resolve the issue. Both sides lobby for support,⁴¹ but Yasa garners the support of *arahants* from Pāvā and from Avantī as well as Revata who is described as a carrier of the tradition, an expert in *dhamma* and *Vinaya* (*Cullavagga* XII 1.8-9). Yasa then arranges the venue for the convention as the site of Sabbakāma, who is the oldest elder and who shared Ānanda's cell (*Cullavagga* XII 2.4). Not surprisingly, Yasa's side ends up victorious.

From these examples, we see that disagreements between communions are usually expressed in terms of specific *Vinaya* rules, or, occasionally, in terms of *dhamma*, which is defined as accord with *Vinaya* rules. The *Vinaya* thus places itself in

(*History of Religions* 16 [1977]: 237-272).

⁴⁰For example, in the case of the disputatious *bhikkhus* from Kosambī, the Buddha articulates the difference between speakers of *dhamma* and speakers of *adhamma*. Basically, the former is in accord with *Vinaya*, the latter has points confused (*Mahāvagga* X 5.4-5).

⁴¹Another way of distinguishing *dhamma* from *adhamma* is by democratic vote. See *Cullavagga* IV 14.26.

a position of authority in defining not only the conduct of monastics, but also the Buddha's *dhamma*. It sees itself as the definitive source for determining what it means to be a Buddhist. In its own eyes, it defines, legislates, and preserves the identity of the *sangha*. As the verses which conclude the first chapter of the *Mahāvagga* state succinctly:

Even if the *Suttas* and the *Abhidhamma* were to be forgotten for all times, while *Vinaya* is not destroyed, the Buddha's teachings (*sāsana*) will persist.⁴²

Boundaries Within: Women's World in the *Sangha*

In assuming this authority, the *Vinaya* assumes the characteristics of the Buddha as the enlightened being from which the monastic life stems, and toward which it is dedicated. The embodiment of the Buddha's *bodhi* is more fully developed throughout the *Khandhakas* than that in the frame narrative. Where the frame narrative simply sets out symbolically the correspondence between the characteristics of an enlightened being and those of the newly formed *sangha*, the rest of the *Khandhakas* articulate how those characteristics are defined by communal purity, how they are protected by boundaries, and how they are expressed by authority and hierarchy. The *Khandhakas* also develop more fully how women, even *bhikkhunīs*, are to be excluded from the carefully bounded territory of the ideal *sangha*.

⁴²*pamutthamhi ca suttante abhidhamme ca tāvade/ vinaye avinatthamhi puna titthati sāsanaṃ.*

In our analysis thus far we have seen the systematic exclusion of *bhikkhunīs* from all the formal decisions and actions that pertain to the corporate *sangha*. *Bhikkhunīs* are consistently associated with probationers, novices, layfolk, and those undergoing discipline for an offense. They cannot be present at the *bhikkhus'* recitation of *Pātimokkha* at the *uposatha* (even though it includes the rules for *bhikkhunīs*) or at the *pavāraṇā* ceremony. They cannot be counted as full members to make up the quorum required of certain formal acts, nor can they split a *sangha* even if they side with schismatics.⁴³ They cannot even lodge a protest in the midst of official proceedings, or suspend the *pavāraṇā* of *bhikkhus*, reprove them, or remind them (*Cullavagga* X 20).

These prohibitions highlight the ambiguous status of *bhikkhunīs*. At best, *bhikkhunīs* occupy the status of perpetual novices; at worst, they embody the condition of permanent, irrevocable transgression or impurity. *Bhikkhunīs* have no voice with regard to the institutional life of the *sangha*, but are presented as the passive recipients of others' decisions.

The texts provide an interesting confirmation of the ambiguous status of *bhikkhunīs*. The only reference in the *Vinaya* to the four assemblies referred to in other Pali literature (*bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, *upāsakas*, and *upāsikās*) is a situation rather than an explicit reference. Chapter X of

⁴³*Mahāvagga* VII 5.1. Once again, *bhikkhunīs* share this dubious distinction with probationers, novices, and the laity.

the *Mahāvagga* describes a division in the *sangha* over a question about an individual *bhikkhu*'s conduct. The *bhikkhus* of Kosambī suspend a competent *bhikkhu* for not acknowledging his offense. He claims he committed no offense. Others take his side, and the dispute threatens to become a full-scale schism. At the Buddha's instigation, various groups convene to resolve the dispute.

Their efforts are ultimately successful, but in the course of the narrative differing communities question the Buddha about how they should behave towards the disputatious *sangha* (*Mahāvagga* X 5.3-9). These communities involve other *bhikkhus* (represented by Sāriputta), *bhikkhunīs* (represented by Mahāpajāpatī), lay men (represented by Anāthapiṇḍika), and lay women (represented by Visākhā). The Buddha advises Sāriputta to stand with the *dhamma*; Mahāpajāpatī to listen to both sides and consider the interests of *bhikkhunīs*; and Anāthapiṇḍika and Visākhā to give gifts to both sides, but to choose sides according to the *dhamma*. The Buddha's advice to Mahāpajāpatī is much closer to that for the laity than it is to *bhikkhus*. The four assemblies may be referred to in this passage, but they are certainly not on equal footing.

This example does, however, illustrate the relative autonomy of the *bhikkhunī-sangha*. Mahāpajāpatī is advised to choose for herself which side can better benefit *bhikkhunīs*. She is granted autonomy, but her decision affects only her fellow *bhikkhunīs*. It has no impact on the *sangha* as a whole,

nor is her input welcomed in resolving the dispute. She may have autonomy, but it is limited to the women's world within the *sangha* and does not apply to the *sangha* as a whole.

The only forum in which *bhikkhunīs* have authority and autonomy is within the confines of the *bhikkhunī-sangha*. *Cullavagga* X outlines the parameters of this autonomy, presenting the rules and situations pertaining to the corporate life of the *bhikkhunī-sangha*. It comprises a mini-*Khandhaka* for *bhikkhunīs*. The text opens with the story of Mahāpajāpatī, but moves rapidly into the format of other *Khandhaka* texts after the conclusion of the story. Following the organization of the *Mahāvagga*, Mahāpajāpatī asks the Buddha about the ordination of *bhikkhunīs*. The Buddha allows *bhikkhus* to ordain them, though he affirms that Mahāpajāpatī was ordained by her acceptance of the *garudhamma* (*Cullavagga* X 2.1). Then, Mahāpajāpatī asks the Buddha to rescind the first *garudhamma*, that all *bhikkhus* are institutionally superior to all *bhikkhunīs*. The Buddha refuses as other sects do not allow equality between their male and female members. Any *bhikkhu* to greet a *bhikkhunī* with equality commits an offense of wrong-doing (3.1).⁴⁴

⁴⁴This greeting hierarchy is presented in full in the section on lodgings (*Cullavagga* VI 6.5). A *bhikkhu* must not greet a *bhikkhu* junior to him, someone not ordained, someone from a different communion who speaks *adhamma*, a woman (*mātu-gāma*), a eunuch, a probationer, or a transgressor. Interestingly, instead of the more common "*bhikkhunī*" in similar lists throughout the *Vinaya*, this list omits specific reference to ordained women, preferring the more generic "*mātugāma*".

Bhikkhunīs, however, are required to observe a system of seniority among themselves, though this is more limited than that for *bhikkhus*. Only eight *bhikkhunīs* are to be seated in the refectory according to seniority. All others sit according to order of entrance (*Cullavagga* X 18). Furthermore, a *bhikkhunī* undergoing the *mānatta* discipline (temporary suspension) is allowed a *bhikkhunī*-companion (*Cullavagga* X 25.3); the comparable discipline for a *bhikkhu* is virtual ostracism. Thus, the separation from communal participation mandated for a transgressing *bhikkhu* is modified for a transgressing *bhikkhunī*.

This internal system of hierarchy within the *bhikkhunī-sangha* confirms the relative autonomy of the women's world. We see a set of internal boundaries within the *sangha* itself. Just as *bhikkhu* transgressors are carefully separated from regular *bhikkhus*, so are *bhikkhunīs* institutionally separate. Transgressing *bhikkhus* are prohibited from communal participation and the seniority scheme, but their behaviour towards fellow transgressors is carefully articulated (*Cullavagga* II 1.1). A *bhikkhu* under probation (*pārivāsika*) loses all seniority, except in interaction with other probationers. *Bhikkhus* under probation are to conduct themselves among fellow probationers according to their relative seniority in all aspects of communal life including the *uposatha*, *pavāraṇā*, *kāṭhina* rites and with regard to gifts from the laity and almsround etiquette. Similarly, *bhikkhunīs* may be institu-

tionally inferior to *bhikkhus*, but they have their own system of seniority and participate in communal gatherings among themselves. In effect, the *bhikkhunī-sangha* is institutionally comparable to a "different communion" within the *bhikkhu-sangha*.

The Buddha's concern for other sects with regard to the seniority of all *bhikkhus* over *bhikkhunīs* is very significant. This is the only case in *Cullavagga* X in which the Buddha expresses such a concern. In all other cases relating to *bhikkhunīs*, his concern is for the opinions of householders. Yet, as we have seen, sectarian interests dictate the most important rules relating to the institutional administration of the *bhikkhu-sangha*: ordination procedures result from *bhikkhus* behaving like *brahmins* (*Mahāvagga* I 25.1-24); sectarian practices provide the rationale for the *uposatha* (*Mahāvagga* II 1.1), for the *vassa* retreat (*Mahāvagga* III 1.1-3), and for the *pavāraṇā* ritual (*Mahāvagga* IV 1.12). For the *bhikkhu-sangha*, householder concerns influence matters of personal dress and hygiene,⁴⁵ not internal organization and hierarchy.

In contrast, almost every issue of *bhikkhunī* adminis-

⁴⁵For example, householders object to elaborate sandals (*Mahāvagga* V 2.1-4), the storing of food (VI 15.9-10), the colour of robes (VII 11.2), bathing practices (*Cullavagga* V 1.1), use of ornaments (*Cullavagga* V 2.1-6), and use of money (*Cullavagga* V 9.1). In no case do householders impact upon administrative procedures for *bhikkhus*, except, perhaps, in their assessment of very young *bhikkhus* as the children of *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* (*Mahāvagga* I 50).

tration is dictated by the criticism of householders. The Buddha initially advises *bhikkhus* to recite the *Pātimokkha* for *bhikkhunīs*, but confines it to *bhikkhunīs* when householders worry that *bhikkhus* are keeping *bhikkhunīs* as mistresses (Cullavagga X 6.1). For the same reason, the Buddha overturns his original scheme for *bhikkhunīs* to confess transgressions to *bhikkhus* and for formal acts to be carried out by *bhikkhus* for *bhikkhunīs* (6.2-3). After allowing this much administrative autonomy, the Buddha concedes the justice of allowing *bhikkhunīs* to resolve their own disputes, in this case, prompted only by the *bhikkhunīs'* request (7).

We see from this a differing set of motives underlying the rules. While the main aspects of *bhikkhu* corporate life reflect a clear concern with identifying the *sangha* with other ascetic groups yet distinguishing it from them, the rulings specific to *bhikkhunī* corporate life are seemingly arbitrary (the Buddha changes his mind repeatedly) and reflect a concern with a much more limited sphere of influence. *Bhikkhunī* identity is of relevance only to householders and *bhikkhus*.

Householders also play a decisive role in many of the rules for *bhikkhus*,⁴⁶ however, as we have seen, *bhikkhu*-

⁴⁶See for example I.B. Horner, *BD I*, pp. xvi-xvii. In her *Women Under Primitive Buddhism*, Horner elaborates on and documents the influence of householders in the formulation of new rules. "Their criticism, also, was constantly directed towards its better management; towards the more seemly, thoughtful, and grateful and less greedy conduct of the almsmen [*bhikkhus*] and almswomen [*bhikkhunīs*]; and they complained if they thought that the almspeople were tending to become too much like people still living in the world (*gihikā*-

identity is primarily formulated in opposition to householders and in relation to other sectarian groups. For *bhikkhunīs*, the opposition to the householder lifestyle is not so clear, and sectarian interests are simply inconsequential. *Bhikkhunīs*, as we shall see in the next chapter, occupy a liminal space between full members of the *sangha* (*bhikkhus*) and householders.

For *bhikkhus*, as they are presented in these Vinaya texts, *bhikkhunīs* represent an administrative nuisance that must be accommodated. The solution to the problem posed by *bhikkhunīs* is similar to that posed by transgressing *bhikkhus*. Just as transgressors are marginalized, silenced, and limited in their ability to effect institutional change, so are *bhikkhunīs*. But, like transgressors, they do require attention. After all, like transgressors, they wear the yellow robes and interact with the laity. Even so, they cannot be considered full members of the *sangha*. Though they are fully ordained and fully capable of attaining *nibbāna*, they are very carefully and systematically excluded from the privileges and responsibilities of full members.

Bhikkhus who support *bhikkhunīs* face similar treatment. The most consistent example of this is Ānanda (see e.g., his reprimand at the first council for allowing women to honour

mabhoginiyo). " She continues, "the good almspeople, at least, were as determined as the laity to keep the discrepancy between life in the Order and life in the world as wide as possible" (p. 317).

the Buddha's body and for convincing the Buddha to ordain women).⁴⁷ There is, however, one other character in the Vinaya who causes dissension by his inappropriate support for *bhikkhunīs* (Cullavagga IV 14.1). Modest *bhikkhus* complain to the Buddha about Channa intruding in a quarrel between *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* and siding with the *bhikkhunīs*. Interestingly, though this kind of situation typically leads to the Buddha ruling against the offending *bhikkhu*, in this case, no judgment is formulated against Channa. Instead, the Buddha enters into a long discussion about types of disputes that can be addressed as legal questions. Channa is not reprimanded.

The first council rectifies this situation by imposing the *brahmadāṇḍa* on him.⁴⁸ The *brahmadāṇḍa* involves the absolute shunning of Channa by the *sangha*: he is not to be

⁴⁷I address Ānanda's concern for women and the reprimands he faces at the first council below, pp. 205-213.

⁴⁸In a footnote, Horner acknowledges that the transgression for which Channa receives this punishment is unclear (BD V, p. 402, n. 3). It may have been for reviling Sāriputta and Moggallāna (DhA. II. 110-112) or for siding with *bhikkhunīs*. I tend towards the latter possibility. Situations of *bhikkhus* reviling one another are addressed in the Vinaya (Pācittiya 2) but the punishment for *bhikkhus* siding with *bhikkhunīs* is not specified.

Channa appears relatively frequently in the Vinaya, usually for failing to respect authority (eg., *Sanghādisesa* XII, Pācittiya 12, 54, and 71). All these infractions, however, are dealt with, with the exception of his siding with *bhikkhunīs*. More evidence for his close association with *bhikkhunīs* is the use of the term *sikkhamāna* ("probationer") to refer to him in Pācittiya 71.1. Usually this technical term is reserved for women undergoing the mandatory two-year training period prior to ordination.

spoken to, exhorted, or instructed by *bhikkhus* (*Cullavagga* XI 1.12).⁴⁹ As such, this penalty represents the most extreme punishment in the *Vinaya* with the exception of the complete expulsion. No time limit or opportunity for revocation of this penalty is specified, though Ānanda revokes it after Channa has attained *nibbāna* (*Cullavagga* XI 1.15).⁵⁰

We see, therefore, that the systematic exclusion of *bhikkhunīs* from *sangha*-administration extends to *bhikkhus* who support them. The exclusion of *bhikkhunīs* is very thorough. *Cullavagga* X presents a student of Uppalavannā who, after seven years of concentrating on the *Vinaya*, was forgetful, and lost all she had learned. Thinking "hard indeed is it for a woman to follow a teacher for her whole life",⁵¹ she tells the *bhikkhunīs* her problem. They tell *bhikkhus*, who tell the Buddha, who dictates that *Vinaya* is to be taught to *bhikkhunīs* by *bhikkhus* (*Cullavagga* X 8). Instead of delegating the task to others as he does when *bhikkhus* are incompetent,⁵² the Buddha accepts her assessment of women's inherent inabilities,

⁴⁹See also DN II 6.4, *Dialogues* II, p. 171-172.

⁵⁰With the exception of *Pārājika* offenses for which permanent expulsion from the *sangha* is mandated, all others are carefully limited and the situations and procedures for revocation clearly specified. See *Cullavagga* I and III.

⁵¹*tena kno pana samayena Uppalavannā bhikkhuniyā antevāsi-bhikkhunī satta vassāni bhagavantam anubaddhā hoti vinayam pariyāpunantī, tassā mutthassatiniyā gahito -- gahito mussati. ... dukkaram kho pana mātugāmena yāvajīvam satthāram anubandhitum.*

⁵²See *Mahāvagga* II 17 which is entirely devoted to situations of *bhikkhu* incompetence.

and removes the task from women's hands.

In this image of *bhikkhunī* incompetence and the Buddha's solution we have a striking symbol of the processes operative throughout the *Khandhakas*. Unable to fully embody a masculine model, *bhikkhunīs* are unable to perform the administrative tasks that define, confirm, and legitimize their identity as Buddhist renunciants. They cannot, therefore, fully represent that identity, but must occupy the liminal position of quasi-renunciants who rely on *bhikkhu* management.

CHAPTER IV

Personal Boundaries:

Identity in the *Suttavibhanga*

In the preceding chapters, we have seen the complete and systematic exclusion of *bhikkhunīs* from the corporate administration and communal identity of the *sangha*. Yet the texts also accommodate *bhikkhunīs*, implicitly recognizing them as ordained members of the *sangha*. *Bhikkhunīs* thus occupy a symbolic state of limbo, being treated in the texts simultaneously as outsiders and insiders. This ambiguous status is inherently problematic within the symbolic universe of the *Vinaya* as it represents a weakening of the structural integrity of the boundaries that the *Vinaya* as a whole seems designed to construct, maintain, and fortify.

In the *Kandhakas* the problem of women's presence in the *sangha* is dealt with by constructing a set of internal boundaries that separate *bhikkhunīs* from *bhikkhus* thereby protecting *bhikkhus'* purity from feminine defilement; in essence, *bhikkhunīs* are treated in the same way as *bhikkhus* who have defiled themselves by transgressing the rules of the *Pātimokkha*. However, as we shall see in this chapter, this solution is only partially successful. The embodiment of the

Buddha's *bodhi*, which constitutes the ideal throughout the *Vinaya*, applies not only to the *sangha* as a corporate body, but also to individual members of the *sangha*.

Upon full ordination (*upasampadā*), each member of the *sangha* becomes a representative of both the *sangha* and the Buddha before the supporting lay community. Fully ordained *bhikkhunīs*, in theory, should fulfil this function as well as fully ordained *bhikkhus*. As we have seen, admission requirements for men limit the pool of applicants to those whose physical appearance conforms with an ideal of wholeness and bodily integrity. Those who meet the requirements are ordained and, so long as they maintain the ideal by not transgressing the *Pātimokkha* code of conduct, are granted full membership in the *sangha*. Women are subject to similar admission requirements,¹ but *bhikkhunīs* are never granted this full membership. In the terms of my analysis, *bhikkhunīs* do not assume the identity of the *sangha* and, therefore, do not embody the Buddha's *bodhi*.

In this chapter I support this claim with an analysis of the *Suttavibhaṅga*, the section of the *Vinaya* containing the

¹Admission requirements for a woman concentrate on her sexual characteristics (*Cullavagga* X 17.1): whether sexual characteristics are absent (*animittā*), dysfunctional (*alohitā*, not [capable of] menstruation), constantly menstruating and oozing (*dhuvalohitāpi dhuvacolāpi paggharantī*), or defective (*sikharinī*); whether she is a female eunuch (*itthipandikā*), a "man-like woman" (*vepurisikā*), of mixed up sexuality (*sambhinnā*), or a hermaphrodite (*ubhatovyañjanā*). Like the admission requirements for men (*Mahāvagga* I 76-77), however, implicit in these requirements is a concern for bodily wholeness.

rules of the *Pātimokkha*. My concentration in this analysis is on the frame narratives as I am interested more in the symbolic associations in which the rules are embedded than in the rules themselves.² Furthermore, I confine my analysis, for the most part to the two most serious categories of rules, the *Pārājika* and *Saṅghādisesa*, as these categories involve the process of boundary definition most clearly: offenders of *Pārājika* rules are expelled from the *sangha*; offenders of *Saṅghādisesa* rules are temporarily excluded from participation in the *sangha*.

My argument is that the model identity created in the *Vinaya* does not apply to *bhikkhunīs*. This identity, adopted by the ideal *bhikkhus* portrayed throughout the *Vinaya*, exemplifies all the characteristics of enlightened beings: they are pure, perfectly contained and controlled in body,

²My approach here differs significantly from that of other scholars. The *Pātimokkha* is the category of *Vinaya* literature that has received the most attention from scholars, many of whom have engaged in a comparative analysis of the *Pātimokkha* (Sanskrit *Prātimokṣa*) code in the different schools of Buddhism. The rules in the most serious categories (*Pārājika*, *Saṅghādisesa*, *Aniyata*, and *Pācittiya*) are identical in number and content in the differing schools. In the less serious categories, variations appear in both number and content. For the *bhikkhu Pātimokkha*, see Charles Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline: The Sanskrit Prātimokṣa Sūtras of the Mahāśāṃghikas and Mūlasarvāstivādins* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975); Janice Nattier and Charles Prebish, "Mahāśāṃghika Origins"; and especially, the classic study by W. Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa: On the Basis of its Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pali Versions* (Santiniketan: Sino-Indian Cultural Society, 1955). For the *bhikkhunī Pātimokkha* see Chatsumarn Kabil-singh, *A Comparative Study of Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha* (Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia, 1984).

speech, and mind, and assume a position of superiority *vis-á-vis* non-enlightened folk. They are also male, as we have seen in our previous analyses of the Buddha biography and the *Khandhakas*. *Bhikkhunīs* cannot be male, so they cannot fully embody the Buddha. By implication, they are not pure, they lack physical, social, and moral containment, and they cannot assume a position of superiority. This explains why *bhikkhunīs* are systematically denied the opportunity to create, sustain, and embody the boundaries that define the corporate unity of the *sangha*.

My analysis in this chapter is designed to extend the argument of the preceding chapters into the realm of the individual--to examine how individual *bhikkhus* ideally assume the identity of the Buddha and to demonstrate that individual *bhikkhunīs* do not assume this identity. I develop the argument in three sections. First I concentrate on the rationale and function of the *Pātimokkha* code as it is expressed in the frame narrative to the *Suttavibhaṅga* and in the story of the first offense that leads to the institution of rules which comprise the *Pātimokkha*. In this section, I argue that the *Pātimokkha* is explicitly designed to create boundaries around the individual *bhikkhu*, protecting the purity of the person as the geographical and social boundaries of the *uposatha* protect the purity of the community.

In the second section, I shift into an analysis of how these personal boundaries apply differently to *bhikkhus* than

to *bhikkhunīs*. The *Pārājika* offenses for *bhikkhus* function to protect *bhikkhus* from external sources of defilement. The individual *bhikkhu* is pure. The *Pārājika* offenses for *bhikkhunīs*, however, do not present the main problem as external defilement. Rather, impurity resides within individual *bhikkhunīs*. The *Pārājika* rules, therefore, function to protect the *sangha* from that impurity; they confine *bhikkhunīs*.

The implication of this differing representation of *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunī* purity is that the *Pātimokkha* code which functions to protect the purity of the *brahmacariya* must apply differently to *bhikkhunīs* than to *bhikkhus*. As I argue in the final section, the boundaries implicit in the *Pātimokkha* define *bhikkhu* interactions with outsiders. The rules function to articulate the parameters of *bhikkhu* identity and its difference from lay identity. For *bhikkhunīs*, however, the boundaries of the *Pātimokkha* are fraught with incongruities. *Bhikkhunī* interaction with the laity is so highly problematic that *Pātimokkha* rules prohibit interaction. The rules, therefore, do not function to define the boundaries of *bhikkhunī* identity, but preclude the development of identity. The *Pātimokkha* for *bhikkhunīs* does not define them so much as confines them.

Breaching the Boundaries: The Rationale for *Pātimokkha*

Like the *Khandhakas*, the *Suttavibhanga* opens with a frame

narrative that provides a model and a justification for the rest of the text. In the *Suttavibhanga*, this narrative consists of an excerpt from the Buddha's teaching career and an explicit rationale for the institution of the *Pātimokkha* code of conduct for individual *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. At the end of this narrative (*Pārājika* I 1-4), the text shifts abruptly to the story of the offense which leads to the formation of the *Pātimokkha* rules (*Pārājika* I 5). The rationale and the offense are, as we shall see, conceptually and thematically linked. Together, they define what the *Pātimokkha* is and how it functions to promote and preserve the renunciant identity of an ideal *bhikkhu*.³

³Scholars are divided about the meaning, chronology, and etymology of the *Pātimokkha* and its relationship to the *Suttavibhanga*. On the one hand, some scholars follow Sukumar Dutt's hypothesis that the *Pātimokkha* evolved early in Buddhist history as a concise statement of the Buddha's *dhamma* which distinguished the Buddha's followers (*sakyaputta*) from other ascetic groups and unified an otherwise individualistic community. In this theory, the nascent *Pātimokkha* evolved over time into a code of conduct and then acquired a commentary, the *Suttavibhanga*. Sukumar Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism* (revised ed. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 72-73; Prebish, *ibid*, pp. 17-20; Sangharaksita, *The Three Jewels* (London: Rider and Co., 1967, rpr. London: Windhorse Publications, 1977), pp. 206-207; and John Holt, *Discipline*, p. 38.

Other scholars, however, see this development in reverse, viewing the *Pātimokkha* as condensed and extracted from the larger text of the *Suttavibhanga*. Dutt has been severely criticized for his hypothesis as there is little doubt that the *Vinaya* clearly sets forth both the itinerate and settled life. Dutt's theory is based on a limited and problematic reading of the texts. See Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, pp. 14-15 and throughout and Steven Collins, "Introduction" (*Buddhist Monastic Life*), pp. xiv-xv. Collins, however, introduces a cautionary note to his critique, pointing out that Dutt proposed his theory only as an hypothesis, though others have cited it as fact.

This renunciant identity must be kept perfectly pure and fully contained. The frame narrative to the *Suttavibhaṅga* develops this identity even further and outlines the consequences of defilement transgressing the boundaries of the ideal *bhikkhu*. As we have already seen in the Mahāpajāpatī story, the consequences extend beyond the limited sphere of the individual, or even the community, to affect the realm of the *dhamma* itself. Defilement of an individual *bhikkhu* poses a threat to the lifetime of *brahmacariya*, and has cosmic repercussions.

The frame narrative to the *Suttavibhaṅga* opens with a description of the Buddha's encounter with a *brahman* where the *brahman* questions the Buddha's failure to pay respect to elderly *brahmins*. The Buddha responds that there is no-one in the manifold realms to whom he should defer (*Pārājika* I 1.2).⁴

Judging from the internal evidence in the *Vinaya*, I tend to agree with the latter view. The *Vinaya* clearly states that the rules must be understood in their context (*nidāna*) and in terms of their analysis (*suttavibhaṅga*). See *Mahāvagga* II 15.1-2 where the Buddha specifies that in normal circumstances the recital of *Pātimokkha* must include all the categories of rules and the *nidāna*, the location of the Buddha at the time of instituting the rule. The bare code, though summarized at the *uposatha*, is not presented in the *Vinaya* as adequate. See, for example, *Cullavagga* IV 14.23 where knowledge of the bare code (*sutta*) is considered insufficient without knowledge of its analysis (*suttavibhaṅga*). Whatever the "true" chronology may have been, in the symbolic universe of the *Vinaya*, the rules are inseparable from their narrative and commentarial framework.

⁴The Buddha includes the world of *devas*, ascetics, *brahmins*, and human beings in his list of possible objects of respect, and includes greeting them (*abhivādeti*), rising up for them (*paccuṭṭhāti*), or offering them a seat (*āsena nimanteti*). These are the standard greeting rituals pre-

The *brahman* challenges the Buddha about various features of his doctrine. The Buddha clarifies the *brahman's* misconceptions, using the same words as the *brahman*, but adapting them to make them appropriate to the Buddha's doctrine (*Pārājika* I 1.3).⁵ The Buddha then announces to the *brahman* that he is unique in the world as an utterly and unsurpassed enlightened one (*anuttaram sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho*). Thus, indeed, he is the world's eldest (*jeṭṭha*), the world's best (*seṭṭha*, *Pārājika* I 1.4). Following this announcement, the Buddha describes to the *brahman* the elements of enlightenment: the realization of former lifetimes, the comprehension of the transmigration of beings, and the complete knowledge of the destruction of *āsavas* (*Pārājika* I 1.5-8).⁶ The *brahman* immediately converts, asking to become an *upāsaka*, and offers to host the Buddha and his *bhikkhus* for the rainy season.

In this introductory narrative are several important themes which pervade the rest of the *Suttavibhaṅga*. The

scribed from juniors to seniors.

⁵For example, the *brahman* accuses the Buddha of professing the doctrine of non-action (*akiriyavāda*), the idea that there are no moral consequences for any kind of action. This theory is usually associated with Pūraṇa Kassapa, the leader of a rival sect of ascetics (D I 52; *Dialogues*, p. 69-70). The Buddha responds that he does indeed propound the doctrine of non-action--the non-doing of transgressions (*duccarita*) of body, speech, or mind; the non-doing of various evil and detrimental things.

⁶These three knowledges, the *tevijja*, occur in the three successive watches of the night.

Buddha's superiority is central: he defers to no-one. His supremacy, implicit in the ways in which others approach him in the frame narrative to the *Khandhakas* (*Mahāvagga* I 1-13) is here made explicit. Because he is fully enlightened, he merits higher status than any being in the manifold realms. He is also deserving of gifts. In converting and offering to host the Buddha and his *sangha*, the *brahman* acknowledges the truth of the Buddha's claim. Against the best challenge the *brahman* could offer, the Buddha demonstrates his superiority, his otherness, his right to receive gifts.

The frame narrative thus opens with a clear statement of the ideal characteristics of an enlightened being. Later in the narrative, however, this ideal is problematized. While meditating, Sāriputta suddenly questions the lifetime of *brahmacariya* under Buddhas of the past (*Pārājika* I 3.). He asks the Buddha, who responds that under Vipassin, Sikhin and Vessabhu, the *brahmacariya* did not last long, but under Kakusandha, Konāgamana, and Kassapa it did. When questioned why, the Buddha replies that the first three were idle in preaching *dhamma* to the disciples who, subsequently, were left with few *suttas*; they did not make known the course of training (*sikkhāpada*); and the *Pāṭimokkha* was not appointed. These early Buddhas did exhort their followers to attain *nibbāna*, but, once they were dead, there was nothing left for later recruits to follow. The latter three Buddhas were diligent in teaching *dhamma*, in providing *suttas*, in describing

the *sikkhāpada* and appointing the *Pāṭimokkha*. The *brahmacariya*, therefore, persisted for a long time after these latter three Buddhas.

Sāriputta responds by suggesting that the Buddha should institute his own *sikkhāpada* and *Pāṭimokkha*, but the Buddha replies that the time is not yet ripe for the conditions that cause the *āsavas* (*āsavaṭṭhāniyā dhammā*) are not yet present in the *sangha*. When these conditions appear, the Buddha will set forth the *sikkhāpada* and the *Pāṭimokkha* to ward them off (or strike them down, *paṭighātāya*). This happens naturally through time, says the Buddha, but for now, the *bhikkhusangha* is "devoid of immorality, devoid of danger, stainless, purified, based on the essential" (*Pārājika* I 3.4).⁷ Even the most backward of *bhikkhus* has attained the state of *sotāpanna* ("stream-entry", the first level of the path to *nibbāna*).

Here we have the rationale for instituting the *Pāṭimokkha* (the lifetime of *brahmacariya*), the cosmic context in which it is placed (the Buddhas of the past), and the concern for purity that defines its function (warding off the *āsavas*).⁸

⁷*nirabbudo, nirādīnavo, apagatakālako, suddho, sāre patitṭhito.*

⁸Note the structural parallels with the Mahāpajāpatī story: the problem in all accounts with women's ordination is the lifetime of *brahmacariya*; references to the impurity concomitant with women's presence (not *āsavas* per se, but contamination and disease and the various flowing substances in the account are clearly parallel); and, in the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin account, Ānanda's reference to Buddhas of the past instituting the four-fold assembly as justification for admitting Mahāpajāpatī.

Furthermore, in a simile the Buddha uses to describe the effects of past Buddhas' laxity, he explicitly refers to the lack of "binding" among *bhikkhus* that causes the dissipation and premature decline of *brahmacariya*: "Just as the wind disperses, scatters, and destroys various flowers placed on a board without being tied together by a thread, [so does the *brahmacariya* disperse at the disappearance of the Buddhas and their disciples]" (*Pārājika* I 3.2 and 3).⁹ *Sikkhāpada* and *Pāṭimokkha* are thus essential to hold together the *brahmacariya* and ensure its survival. That is, in this account, they function to bind together both the teachings and the *bhikkhus*.

We find, therefore, that the frame narrative that opens the *Suttavibhanga* conveys the same emphases we discovered in our previous analyses. Unity or wholeness is required for the preservation of *brahmacariya*, the celibate lifestyle that emulates the purity of the Buddha's enlightenment. The *brahmacariya* is threatened by incursion from the *āsavas*, the flowing substances that defile and contaminate the Buddha's pure sphere of enlightenment at all three levels, the individual, the communal, and the cosmic. Up to this point in the *Vinaya* chronology, the *āsavas* have not yet intruded, but their intrusion is inevitable. As the *brahmacariya* was of limited duration in the past, so is it expected to decline under the tutelage of the current Buddha. The beginning of decline is

⁹*seyyathāpi Sāriputta nānāpupphāni phalake nikkhittāni suttana asaṃgahitāni tāni vāto vikirati vidhamati viddhamseti.*

marked by the necessity to formulate the *Pātimokkha* code: when a single *bhikkhu* allows the *āsavas* entry into his person, he will have contaminated the *sangha* and the *brahmacariya* it upholds. In the next section of the text, this is precisely what happens.

At the end of the rainy season, the Buddha takes leave of the *brahman* and travels to Vesālī. Sudinna Kalandaka hears the Buddha teaching the *dhamma* and decides to renounce. His parents are extremely reluctant to give their permission, and Sudinna convinces them only after engaging in a fast. They consent, and Sudinna receives the *pabbajjā* and then the *upasampadā* ordination. He then moves to a village of the Vajjians (*Pārājika* I 1-5.4). But the region experiences a famine. Short of alms, Sudinna thinks to move to a wealthier locale, his previous home, where relatives will feed him and his colleagues (*Pārājika* I 5.5).

There, his father and mother seek to tempt him back to the household life by displaying several heaps of gold and riches. Sudinna is unswayed as he is "delighted to lead the *brahmacariya*" (*abhirato ahaṃ brahmacariyaṃ carāmi*). His father then asks his daughter-in-law to tempt Sudinna. She dresses in her most appealing clothing and adorns herself; then she approaches him, asking if he has discovered beautiful nymphs (*accharā*) to replace her. Sudinna rejects her, calling her "sister" (*bhagini*), and she swoons (*Pārājika* I 5.7).

Neither of these temptations is effective. Sudinna

remains firm in his commitment to renunciation despite the visual demonstration of the riches he will inherit and the beauty and sexual allure of his former wife. The final temptation, however, he does not resist. After he has turned down his father and his former wife, Sudinna is approached by his mother who repeats his father's request that he, "having returned to the low life, enjoy riches and perform meritorious actions" (*hīnāyāvattitvā bhoge ca bhūñjassu puññaāi ca karohi*). He turns her down saying he cannot do this, does not dare do this (*na ussahāmi na visahāmi*) as he is delighted with *brahmacariya*. But when she requests him to impregnate (*bījika*) his former wife to prevent the confiscation of their wealth, he assents: "It is possible for me to do this, dear mother" (*Pārājika I 5.8*).¹⁰ When his former wife enters the fertile period of her cycle, he impregnates her (*Pārājika I 5.9*).

Sudinna is unswayed by wealth and sexuality but finds his mother's entreaty irresistible. He is, in some ways, presented as an ideal *bhikkhu*: he had to struggle to attain permission to renounce and, once he has renounced, practices the *brahmacariya* very effectively. He is described as "a forest-dweller, an alms-beggar, a rag-wearer, who goes on continuous alms-begging" (*Pārājika I 5.4*).¹¹ He appears to

¹⁰*etaṃ kho me amma sakkā kātun.*

¹¹*āraññiko hoti pindapātiko pamsukūliko sapaḍānacāriko.* In this description, Sudinna's practice closely resembles that advocated in the thirteen *dhutangas* (ascetic practices).

be firm in his commitment. His detachment from his network of kin is clearly emphasized in the account by his reference to his father as "householder" (*gahapati*) and his former wife as "sister" (*bhagini*). But he loses his detachment when approached by his mother. He addresses her with the familiar endearment "mother" (*amma*) and assents to her request.¹²

The consequences of his action are immediate and disastrous. As soon as Sudinna's wife conceives, the *devas* in all

These *dhutangas* do not appear in the main texts of the *Vinaya*, but are detailed in the *Parivāra*, the appendix to the *Vinaya* which scholars universally describe as late. Buddhaghosa devotes an entire chapter of his *Visuddhimagga* (VM II) to describing the *dhutangas* and advising practitioners on appropriate application of them. The *dhutangas* have been the subject of considerable controversy in Pali literature and throughout the history of Theravāda monastic practice. Considered by many to resemble too closely the austerities maintained by other ascetic groups, they are criticized for being a cause of false pride (e.g., MN III 113, MN I 40, and AN III 81-90). They also bear a resemblance to Devadatta's five theses (see the discussion above, p. 131, n. 38). For a discussion of the *dhutangas* in the *Visuddhimagga* and in current Theravāda practice, see S.J. Tambiah, "Purity and Auspiciousness at the Edge of the Hindu Context--in Theravāda Buddhist Societies" (*Journal of Developing Societies* 1 [1985]: 94-108), pp. 97-100, and especially Michael Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka*, pp. 62-66 and throughout.

¹²Following his doctrinal emphasis on the motivation underlying the offenses in the *Vinaya*, John Holt interprets Sudinna's consent and subsequent action as indicative of his continued passion (*raga*), though not for sexual intercourse *per se* as he is clearly not passionate about his former wife. Rather, in Holt's analysis, his actions demonstrate that "he still retains an abiding value in the wealth of his family's possessions and the continuation of his family's material heritage" (*Discipline*, p. 90). He is still influenced by his passionate attachment to material things.

Holt has a good point but it does not engage the issues involved in the differing terminology Sudinna uses to address his relatives, nor does it incorporate the consequences of his actions, which include a disturbance in the cosmic realm, his illness, and the Buddha's severe reprimand.

realms cry aloud, "Certainly friends the *bhikkhusangha* is [supposed to be] devoid of immorality, devoid of danger. But immorality has been introduced, danger has been introduced by Sudinna, the son of Kalandaka" (*Pārājika* I 5.9).¹³ Here we see the significance of the claim, made by the Buddha in the frame narrative, of the purity of his *sangha*. It was pure until Sudinna engaged in intercourse with his former wife. His action defiles not only himself, but also the entire *sangha*. The import of this defilement rocks the cosmos.

It also has disastrous consequences for Sudinna himself. Conscious-stricken at his action, "he became haggard, wretched, of a bad colour, yellowish, the veins showing all over his body, melancholy, of sluggish mind, miserable, depressed, repentant, weighed down with grief" (*Pārājika* I 5.10).¹⁴ His fellow *bhikkhus* asked after his ill health, questioning if he is dissatisfied (*anabhirato*)¹⁵ with *brahmacariya*. No, he replies, he is remorseful at doing the evil deed (*pāpa kamma*) that proves his inability to lead the

¹³*nirabbudo vato bho bhikkusamgho nirādīnavo, Suddinnena Kalandakaputtana abbudaṃ uppāditam ādīnavo upādīto.*

¹⁴Horner's translation, BD I, p. 34.

¹⁵This is the opposite of the term he uses to describe his delight (*abhirato*) with leading *brahmacariya* to his parents. I.B. Horner thinks the term *anabhirato* might imply the actual physical discomfort of unsatisfied sexual needs, though she acknowledges that the term and its opposite are also frequently used simply to indicate satisfaction or delight (BD I, p. 114, n. 1). In the account of *Sanghadisesa* I, Seyyasaka becomes ill in exactly the same way as Sudinna, but the cause of his illness is *anabhirato*, which in this context clearly means sexual discomfort.

completely purified (*paripunna parisuddha*) brahmacariya. The *bhikkhus* concur with his interpretation of his actions and inform the Buddha.¹⁶

The Buddha's response is to vehemently condemn Sudinna's actions:

It is better, foolish man, for your penis to enter the mouth of a terrible poisonous snake [... or a black snake] or a charcoal pit that is burning, ablaze, bright with fire than for it to enter a woman. And why is this? From that, foolish man, you would incur death, or suffering like death, but not from that cause would you attain rebirth in the horrible suffering of the *niraya* hell after the breaking up of your body at death. But from this [i.e., entering a woman], foolish man, you would attain rebirth in the horrible suffering of the *niraya* hell after the breaking up of your body at death.¹⁷

Sexual desire does not appear to be the main problem the Buddha is addressing here. Rather, the issue is clearly the act of sexual intercourse. Furthermore, as we have seen, Sudinna was not motivated by desire (unless we understand his concession as his desire to appease his relatives so he could

¹⁶Apparently the Buddha did not hear the commotion raised by the multitudes of *devas* at the defilement of his *sangha*. It is quite surprising how the Buddha is presented inconsistently throughout the *Vinaya* as sometimes aware of problems but othertimes quite oblivious to them.

¹⁷*varan te moghapurisa āsīvisassa ghoravisassa mukhe aṅgajātaṃ pakkhitaṃ na tv eva mātuḡāmaṣṣa aṅgajāte aṅgajātaṃ pakkhitaṃ. varan te moghapurisa kaṅhasappaṣṣa mukhe aṅgajātaṃ pakkhitaṃ na tv eva mātuḡāmaṣṣa aṅgajātaṃ pakkhitaṃ. varan te moghapurisa aṅfārakāsuyā ādittāya sampajjalitāya sajotibhūtāya aṅfajātaṃ pakkhitaṃ na tv eva mātuḡāmaṣṣa aṅgajāte aṅgajātaṃ pakkhitaṃ. taṃ kissa hetu. tatonidānaṃ hi moghapurisa maraṇaṃ vā nigaccheyya maraṇamattaṃ vā dukkhaṃ, na tv eva tappaccayā kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upajjeyya, itonidānaṃ ca kṇo moghapurisa kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upapajjeyya.*

practice more effectively in peace).¹⁸

But he still faces these disastrous consequences. His intention appears irrelevant and does not mitigate the consequences, contra the majority of cases in the *Vinaya* (though his consent, which is the deciding principle, was given). The consequences are extreme. The Buddha has already informed Sudinna that he will go to hell for his action. Now, he tells him why: "In this very [deed], foolish man, you will enter into non-*dhamma*, village-*dhamma*, vile-*dhamma*, into the wicked [necessity of] cleansing after sex, into the secrecy of couples, into the attainments of couples. Surely you, foolish man, precede many in being the first-doer of evil things" (*Pārājika* I 5.11).¹⁹ The Buddha then institutes the ruling: "Whatever monk should indulge in sexual intercourse becomes *Pārājika*, he is no longer in communion" (*asaṃvāsa*, *Pārājika* I 5.11).

¹⁸See the *Samantapasadika* (p. 157), where his consent is explained by his thought: "If I do not give the seed, they would never let me alone; day and night they will harass me. If I give the son, they would let their minds rest and would bother me no longer. On account of this I would be able to get to the door of the way to a happy life and would practise holy life."

¹⁹*tattha nāma tvam moghapurisa yam tvam asaddhammaṃ gāmadhammaṃ vasaladhammaṃ dutṭhullaṃ oḍakantikam rahassaṃ dvayaṃ dvayasamāpattim samāpajjissasi, bahunnaṃ kho tvam moghapurisa akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ ādikattā pubbaṅgamo.* Here I deviate from Horner's translation ("You are the first-doer of many wrong things"), because she appears to ignore the term *pubbaṅgamo*. I think the interruption of the vocative in the series of genitives indicates differing points of reference. Alternately, we could translate this "you are the originator of many [things], giving precedence to evil *dhammas*."

This, the first *sikhāpada* (rule of training) laid down by the Buddha, marks the beginning of the decline of *brahmacariya*. By engaging in sexual intercourse with his former wife, Sudinna has ruptured the boundaries between the pure realm of *nibbāna* and the impure realm of the *āsavas*. Importantly, he has done so by transgressing the physical, social, and psychological boundaries he assumed when he became a *bhikkhu*;²⁰ he has become the antithesis of a *bhikkhu*.

Sudinna's actions demonstrate his lack of self containment in each of these areas. His physical containment is breached by the act of intercourse and his former wife's conception. His social detachment is overcome by his affection for his mother. In calling her "*amma*", he indicates his attachment to her, in direct contrast with the distance he imposes by referring to his father as *gahapati* and his former wife as *bhagini*. His emotional ties are similarly indicated. Though he feels no desire for either the wealth or the sexual appeal of the householder life, he continues to love his mother.²¹ And this love binds him firmly to the world outside the *sangha*. In acting the son to his mother, he assumes the

²⁰See above, pp. 112-119.

²¹Note the parallels between this analysis and our previous findings: as Sudinna is clearly the antithesis of an ideal *bhikkhu* because of his assent to his mother and his contact with his former wife, Yasa is the paradigmatic *bhikkhu* because of his escape from his mother and his detachment from women (see above, pp. 92-95). As the decline in the *brahmacariya* is hastened by the Buddha's acceptance of his foster-mother's claim on him, the decline of *brahmacariya* is initiated by Sudinna's assent to his mother's request.

role of a householder: because he is a dutiful son, he performs the duties of a husband, and becomes a father.²²

In so doing, he jeopardizes the very foundation of the *brahmacariya*. He has literally perpetuated the cycle of *samsāra*, the cycle of rebirth, which Buddhist monastics are pledged to eradicate. He is thus guilty of *asaddhamma*, that is, of actions that run counter to the Buddha's *dhamma*. In this analysis, personal intention is irrelevant. His action perpetuates *samsāra*, regardless of his intentions.

This analysis also helps us understand why sexual contact with a woman is so problematic. As the carriers of new life, women function biologically as the source of new becomings. To the monks who composed and preserved the *Vinaya* and who clearly had difficulty restraining their sexual desires,²³ women were a perfect symbol of the enticing entrapments of *samsāra*. In the words of Nancy Falk:

...a woman was a veritable image of becoming and of all

²²Thanks to Graeme MacQueen for this insight.

²³This sexual frustration is expressed in the lengthy treatment the *Vinaya* accords sexual desire. See the numerous case studies that follow the Sudinna story (*Pārājika* I 6-10) which involve *bhikkhus* engaging in sexual intercourse with various animals, corpses, and inanimate objects. Additionally, four of the thirteen *Saṅghādisesa* offenses involve sex (*Saṅghādisesa* I-IV) as do both *Aniyata* offenses. According to John Stevens, sexual desire continues to be the major difficulty contemporary monks have with renunciation. Quoting a study by M.E. Spiro, Stevens claims that seventeen out of twenty Asian monks identified resisting sexual temptation as the most difficult part of being a monk. *Lust for Enlightenment: Buddhism and Sex* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990), p. 47, citing M.E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society* (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1963, p. 367), n. 94, p. 151.

the forces of blind growth and productivity which Buddhism knew as *samsāra*. As such she too was the enemy -- not only on a personal level, as an individual source of temptation, but also on a cosmic level, as representation and summation of the processes binding all men. And she especially had to be overcome, if liberation was to remain a possibility.²⁴

We see therefore that the problem implicit in the Sudinna story transcends a simple expression of sexuality. As is indicated by the severity of the Buddha's rebuke, the notice of all kinds of *devas*, and Sudinna's illness, the problem has cosmic proportions. It represents a rupture in the previously impervious boundary that separates the *sangha* from the world of *samsāra*.

Defining Boundaries:

Divisions between Insiders and Outsiders

Sudinna's actions and their consequences symbolize the function of the *Pātimokkha* code for *bhikkhus*. Just as admission and *uposatha* requirements symbolically construct physical, social, and psychological boundaries around the community, the *Pātimokkha* code is explicitly designed to create and enforce boundaries around the individual *bhikkhu*. These boundaries are expressed mainly in terms of behaviour, but they also have implications for the social and psychological dimensions of renunciant life. Sudinna's offense is not

²⁴Nancy Falk, "An Image of Woman in Old Buddhist Literature: The Daughters of Māra" (in *Women and Religion*, ed. by Judith Plaskow and Joan Arnold, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974, pp. 105-112), p. 110.

only his indulgence in sexual intercourse, but also his performance of householder duties and his attachment to his mother. He crosses the boundary separating the *sangha* from the household life with his body, his speech, and his mind.

The rules of the *Pātimokkha* code clearly circumscribe the behaviour of individuals. They also establish the social and psychological limits that must be maintained. As we have seen with the Sudinna story, the social and psychological limits are implicit in the offense--the ruling refers only to inappropriate behaviour--but these intangible limits are crucial to the identity of an ideal renunciant. To establish the characteristics of that identity, we must, therefore, concentrate on the context of the offense as well as the terms of the rule, for it is through the context that the social and psychological contours of the boundaries are revealed.

In theory, these boundaries apply equally to both *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. A clear example of this is the structural parallels between *Pārājika* offenses for *bhikkhus* and those for *bhikkhunīs*. The *Pārājika* offenses are particularly important for our analysis as they are the only offenses for which expulsion from the *sangha* is automatic. They thus articulate the absolute behavioral limitations of individual *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. *Pārājika* offenses demarcate very clearly the boundaries between insider and outsider behaviour. An individual who commits a *Pārājika* offense automatically and irrevocably becomes an outsider. This applies equally to

bhikkhunīs and to *bhikkhus*.

In the *Pārājika* level offenses, however, the types of rules specific to each and their frame narratives display striking differences. The parameters of the boundaries articulated by *Pārājika* offenses are not the same for *bhikkhus* and for *bhikkhunīs*, nor do the *Pārājika* rules perform the same function. For *bhikkhus*, the *Pārājikas* are clearly designed to protect their purity from external defilement. The *Pārājika* rules define the limits of their behaviour. But for *bhikkhunīs*, the *Pārājikas* do not protect them from external defilement, but from internal defilement. The *bhikkhunī Pārājikas* confine their thoughts and attitudes.

This conclusion, however, arises from a detailed comparative analysis of the circumstances and treatment of individual *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunī* offenses. The four *Pārājika* offenses discussed in the separate *vibhaṅgas* exhibit clear structural parallels, though *bhikkhunīs* are subject both to their own and to those of the *bhikkhu-vibhaṅga*.²⁵ *Bhikkhunīs* thus face

²⁵The *Pārājikas* in the *Bhikkhu-Vibhaṅga* are clearly intended to apply equally to *bhikkhunīs*. In the discussion of various situations of offense in the *Bhikkhu-Vibhaṅga*, *bhikkhunīs* are explicitly identified in three of the four *Pārājika* categories. In *Pārājika* I, the *bhikkhunī* Uppalavaṇṇā is raped (I 10.5), but is determined to be innocent of offense as she did not consent. In *Pārājika* II, *bhikkhunīs* are mentioned twice, first in a situation identical to that of *bhikkhus* who reprimand the thief with harsh words, for which there is no offense (II 7.6). The second situation involves a pupil of Thullanandā (discussed below) who mislead donors, but did not steal. In this case, the offense of a deliberate lie involves expiation (*Pācittiya*, II 7.45). The only reference to a *bhikkhunī* in *Pārājika* III is the last case-study in the category and involves an identical set of

double the number of offenses for which permanent expulsion from the *sangha* is mandated.²⁶ Despite this, the similes used to explain each *Pārājika* are identical in both *vibhaṅgas*. The first *Pārājika* in each *vibhaṅga* (*bhikkhu*, sexual intercourse; *bhikkhunī*, cross-sex touching) is compared to a man with his head cut off. The second (*bhikkhu*, theft; *bhikkhunī*, concealing a *Pārājika* fault) is compared to a leaf torn from its stalk. The third (*bhikkhu*, killing; *bhikkhunī*, siding with one who is suspended) is a stone broken in half. And the fourth (*bhikkhu*, false claim to spiritual attainments; *bhikkhunī*, arranging contact with a man) is a palmyra tree cut off at the crown.

In each of these similes, the metaphorical damage is irreparable. The consequence of *Pārājika* offenses for both *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* is fatal. By committing such an offense, the individual has figuratively and literally severed the connection with the true source of life, the *sangha*. The individual is no longer a member of the corporate body, but

circumstances to that of a *bhikkhu*. Both *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunī* discover a man incapacitated by the loss of his hands and feet. After ascertaining that the man's relatives wish his death, they recommend a fatal concoction. Both are charged with *Pārājika*. The fourth *Pārājika*, the false claim to spiritual accomplishments, does not refer to *bhikkhunīs*.

²⁶This imbalance is also true of other categories of rule. The Pali *Pātimokkha* of *bhikkhus* contains 227 rules; that of *bhikkhunīs* contains 311. See Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, *A Comparative Study of Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha* (Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia, 1984), especially the table comparing the rules for *bhikkhunīs* in the *Vinayas* of Theravāda, Dharmagupta, Mahīśāsaka, Mahāsaṅghika, Sarvāstivāda, and Mūla-Sarvāstivāda, p. 47.

will wither away in isolation. This fate applies equally to *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. Both are considered full members of the *sangha* whose membership will be revoked if they cross the boundaries of acceptable behaviour.

The parameters of these boundaries, however, are not identical. By using identical similes, the redactor has clearly attempted to indicate parallel offenses. But the offenses specific to *bhikkhunīs* are not parallel to those of *bhikkhus*. Rather, they reflect a completely different set of issues: where the boundaries of the *Pātimokkha* for *bhikkhus* function to define their identity, the boundaries of the *Pātimokkha* for *bhikkhunīs* function to confine their identity. The distinction is subtle, but crucial. The notion of identity itself is applied differently to *bhikkhus* than to *bhikkhunīs*.

For example, the first *Pārājika* offense for *bhikkhus*, sexual intercourse, is very specific and detailed. The case studies in *Pārājika* I develop clear prohibitions against any object of possible penile penetration, alive or dead, animate or inanimate, human or non-human, female, male, hermaphrodite or eunuch (*paṇḍika*); any situation of possible coercion or rape; any possibility of physical or mental incapacity (*Pārājika* I 6-10). The boundaries limiting sexual encounters of any kind are clearly delineated.²⁷

²⁷Masturbation, however, is not addressed. It falls into the category of *Sanghādisesa* I, where the possible contexts and activities involved with intentional emission of semen are treated with the same kind of detail as in *Pārājika* I.

In the first *Pārājika* for *bhikkhunīs*, however, the discussion is brief, vague and euphemistic. Sundarīnandā, the first offender, is simply described as young, beautiful, experienced, and skilled at building. She is thus chosen to oversee the building that the lay-follower Sālha wants to give to the *bhikkhunī-sangha*. Sālha and Sundarīnandā develop a mutual attraction which Sālha plots to consummate. He invites the *bhikkhunī-sangha* for a meal, planning an isolated rendezvous for himself and Sundarīnandā. She suspects his intentions and pleads illness to avoid attending the meal. Sālha enters the dwelling of the nunnery (*upassaya*), rejects her statement of non-desire (*anicchanta*), and comes into physical contact with her. Sundarīnandā, though claiming the contrary, also feels desire (*avassuta*). An older *bhikkhunī* sees them and reports to other *bhikkhunīs* who report to *bhikkhus* who inform the Buddha. The Buddha questions the *bhikkhus* about the truth of the claim, rebukes Sundarīnandā, and institutes the ruling: "Whatever *bhikkhunī* feeling desire should consent to touching, grasping, holding, rubbing, or pressing against a man who feels desire between the collar-bone and knee becomes *Pārājika*, she is not in communion" (*bhikkhunī Pārājika* I 1).²⁸

This description of the first *bhikkhunī Pārājika* offense

²⁸*yā pana bhikkhunī avassutā avassutassa purisapuggalassa adhakkhakam ubbhajānumaṇḍalam āmasanam vā parāmasanam vā gahanam vā chupanam vā patipīlanam vā sādiyeyya, ayam pi pārājikā hoti asaṃvāsā ubbhajānumaṇḍalikā.*

exemplifies the differences evident throughout the two *vibhaṅgas*. It is extremely brief: in the Pali, it takes up less than one-third the space of the Sudinna story.²⁹ It is also vague and euphemistic: the "touching" between Sundarīnandā and Sālha results in her pregnancy (see *bhikkhunī Pārājika* II). Clearly, the act that is implied in this offense is sexual intercourse.

But sexual intercourse is already prohibited to *bhikkhunīs* as they are subject to the *Pārājikas* of *bhikkhus*. Similarly, cross sex touching is prohibited to *bhikkhus* in *Saṅghādisesa* II. The rule for *bhikkhunīs*, therefore, must refer not to the act of sexual intercourse (as it does for Sudinna), but to the desire for sexual intercourse (*avassuta*). Sundarīnandā, after all, does not give her consent to Sālha, though she feels desire. In contrast, the narrative description of Sudinna actively underplays his desire. The boundaries implicit in these stories are very different. Though the situations are similar, the rulings concentrate on a *bhikkhu's* actions, but a *bhikkhunī's* thoughts.

In this narrative, Sundarīnandā has no control over her thoughts. In fact, the narrative presents Sundarīnandā as completely disempowered in body, speech, and mind. She has actively avoided Sālha, but he intrudes into the nunnery. She

²⁹Vin. IV, pp. 211-213. Sudinna appears in Vin. III, pp. 11-21. Moreover, the case study section is exceedingly brief and abstract for *bhikkhunī Pārājika* I (Vin. IV, pp. 214-215) when compared to that for *bhikkhus* (Vin. IV, pp. 21-40).

rejects him verbally, but he accosts her physically. She denies her desire, but is consumed by it when her body comes in physical contact with him. She is betrayed not only by Sālha, but by her own desires. The boundaries she crosses are not the external boundaries between the *sangha* and the world outside as they are for Sudinna, but internal boundaries. The impurity which mandates her expulsion from the *sangha* originates not from outside as it does with Sudinna, but from within herself. She feels desire, *avassuta*, a term etymologically related to the *āsavas*.³⁰

This contrast between *bhikkhu* boundaries and *bhikkhunī* boundaries is even more clear in the location of the first offense. Sudinna goes outside the perimeter of the *sangha*: he accedes to his mother's request in the city and impregnates his former wife in the forest. In the *bhikkhu-vibhaṅga*, impurity resides outside the boundaries. The *Pātimokkha* protects *bhikkhus* from this external threat. Sundarīnandā remains inside the perimeter of the *sangha*: Sālha follows her in. In the *bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga*, impurity resides within the boundaries, within the individual *bhikkhunī*. The *Pātimokkha* functions to confine this threat, to inhibit it from flowing outward.

The other *bhikkhunī Pārājika* offenses display a similar emphasis on internal boundaries. The second *Pārājika* offense

³⁰Both terms derive from the same root, *sru*, which implies flowing, oozing, leaking, but is figuratively used to refer to the feeling of sexual desire (PED, sv. "avassuta").

involves Sundarīnandā's sister, the *bhikkhunī* Thullanandā, concealing Sundarīnandā's pregnancy. Her offense is, in this case, both mental and social: she conceals something she knows and does not speak of it.³¹ The third *Pārājika* offense for *bhikkhunīs*, siding with one who is suspended, also involves internal boundaries. In this case, Thullanandā symbolically crosses the administrative boundaries set up to distinguish between "pure" *bhikkhus* and those who have committed an offense.³² Similarly, the fourth *bhikkhunī Pārājika*, consenting to any contact with a man or arranging a rendezvous with one, is virtually identical with *bhikkhunī Pārājika* I: the *bhikkhunīs* and the men in the frame narrative both feel desire (*avassuta*).³³

We see therefore that the boundaries implicit in the *Pārājika* offenses function very differently for *bhikkhus* than for *bhikkhunīs*. For *bhikkhus* they define the limits of appropriate behaviour, thereby confirming and protecting the

³¹This *Pārājika* offense also finds parallels with a *bhikkhu* offense, but in this case, the offense of concealing a fault, even of the *Pārājika* level, is relatively minor for *bhikkhus*: it falls in the *Pācittiya* category (*Pācittiya* 64), which involves confession, but no formal meeting of the *sangha* (*Saṅghādisesa*) and no period of suspension (*Mānatta*). The offense is minor only in comparison with the very serious *Pārājika* or *Saṅghādisesa* level offenses. Though amended by confession, grave offenses (*thullaccaya*) are among the most serious of their category. See Chandrika Singh Upasak, *Dictionary of Early Buddhist Monastic Terms Based on Pali Literature* (Varanasi: Bharati Prakashan, 1975), p. 110.

³²See the discussion above, pp. 125-134.

³³Like the other *bhikkhunī Pārājika* offenses, this one is duplicated in *bhikkhu Saṅghādisesa* II and *Aniyata* I and II.

pure identity of the individual member of the *sangha*. For *bhikkhunīs*, they confine impurity within the individual, thereby protecting the purity of the *sangha* from internal defilement. The threat to the purity and integrity of the *sangha* articulated in the story of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination is confirmed by the treatment of individual *bhikkhunīs*. Like Mahāpajāpatī, the uncontrollable impurity of individual *bhikkhunīs* threatens to flow forth (*avassuta*) and contaminate the *sangha*. The *Pātimokkha* code is explicitly designed to protect against the incursion of such flowing (*āsavas*). But, as we have seen, it is *bhikkhus* who represent the pure *brahmacariya* that is to be protected. *Bhikkhunīs* do not represent the *brahmacariya*, but, like non-ordained women, threaten it.

Maintaining Boundaries: Individuals in Interaction

This analysis of *bhikkhunī Pārājika* offenses indicates clearly that *bhikkhunīs* do not assume the identity of an enlightened being. Though they are fully ordained, they resemble householders more than they resemble the Buddha. *Bhikkhunīs* thus occupy a figurative state of limbo between the *sangha* and the city. This ambiguity is inevitably a source of tension: the pervasive emphasis on boundaries throughout the *Vinaya* is clearly designed to separate the *sangha* and the householder life. Because women are so closely associated with the household, their very presence in the *sangha* blurs the distinction which marks this separation.

The solution to this problem at a corporate level is to impose boundaries within the *sangha* separating the pure from the impure; *bhikkhus* from *bhikkhunīs*. At an individual level, the solution is to remove *bhikkhunīs* from the boundaries between the *sangha* and householders. In effect, the *bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga* functions to inhibit *bhikkhunī* interactions outside the *sangha*. The *Pātimokkha* rules for *bhikkhunīs* follow the same pattern as *bhikkhunī Pārājikas*: as the *Pārājika* rules confine the impurity of individual *bhikkhunīs* within themselves, the *Pātimokkha* code for *bhikkhunīs* confines *bhikkhunī* influence to the *sangha*. In so doing, the *Pātimokkha* code functions very differently for *bhikkhus* than for *bhikkhunīs*. The *Pātimokkha* code for *bhikkhus* specifies the appropriate behaviour of *bhikkhus* in contexts of interaction with the laity. It thus articulates clearly the parameters of *bhikkhu* identity and its difference from lay identity. The *Pātimokkha* code for *bhikkhunīs* also treats many situations of interaction, but instead of circumscribing behaviours in the context of interaction, it prohibits interaction. It thus functions for *bhikkhunīs* not to define the boundaries of identity but to preclude the development of identity through interaction. If, as I am arguing, the ideal renunciant identity is defined by boundaries, the restrictions on *bhikkhunī* interaction across the boundaries logically imply restrictions on the application of this ideal renunciant identity to *bhikkhunīs*.

Even a quick glance at the precedent stories for *Pārājika* and *Saṅghādisesa* offenses in the two *vibhaṅgas* reveals a dramatic difference in the types of interaction typical of *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. In the *bhikkhu-vibhaṅga*, *bhikkhus* interact with a great variety of people whose concern for their behaviour is evident in their complaints about offensive acts. In contrast, the *bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga* presents a much more limited sphere of influence.

For example, *bhikkhus* offend the *devas* of the manifold worlds (*Pārājika* I 5.9), a king and his ministers (*Pārājika* II 1.6), the Buddha himself (*Pārājika* III 1.2-3 and IV 1.2), male householders (*Saṅghādisesa* II, VI, VII, X, and XIII), women (*Saṅghādisesa* III, IV, and V), and trustworthy *upāsikās* (*Aniyata* I and II). These represent the majority of the most serious offenses for *bhikkhus*: of the nineteen offenses for which a *bhikkhu* can be expelled or suspended, fourteen are situated in a context where the person offended is not a colleague in the *sangha*. In contrast, of the fourteen serious offenses specific to *bhikkhunīs*, only two describe the reaction of someone outside the *sangha* (*Saṅghādisesa* I and II). The *bhikkhunī* sphere of influence is much more circumscribed than that for *bhikkhus*. Furthermore, in both cases involving outsiders, the Buddha's ruling circumscribes *bhikkhunī* interaction even more.

The first case, *bhikkhunī Saṅghādisesa* I (formally condemning the laity) presents a dispute over ownership. An

upāsaka donates a building to the *bhikkhunī-sangha*, but dies before ownership is transferred. His son contests the donation. Thullanandā brings the dispute before chief ministers who decide in favour of the *bhikkhunī-sangha*. The disputant complains and resorts to various tactics of intimidation,³⁴ Thullananda reports him and he is punished. The townsfolk complain about *bhikkhunīs* taking issue against the disputant and the Buddha rules that *bhikkhunīs* should not institute a lawsuit³⁵ against a householder, slave, worker, or even a wanderer (*samaṇaparibbājaka*). *Bhikkhunīs* are thus prohibited from claiming a donation if it is disputed.

The second case (*Saṅghādīsesa* II) involves Thullanandā accepting into the *sangha* a woman who is about to be killed for committing adultery. The woman's ex-husband complains bitterly that she has escaped punishment for her actions.³⁶ The Buddha issues a rule against *bhikkhunīs* accepting a woman thief without the permission of king, or other secular authorities.

³⁴For example, he complains bitterly and is punished by the ministers; he then instigates some *Ājīvikas* to harass the *bhikkhunīs*. Once again Thullanandā reports his behaviour and he is punished.

³⁵Actually, the ruling states that *bhikkhunīs* should not use quarrelsome language (*ussayavādika*) with these people. In explaining the term, however, the Old commentary refers to the lawsuit (*aṭṭakārikā*).

³⁶The woman's ex-husband has obtained permission to kill her from his *gana* (clan leadership), but once she has joined the *sangha*, King Pasenadi disclaims responsibility. Cf. the *bhikkhu Pārājika* II where the king likewise realizes he can do nothing to a *bhikkhu*.

In both these cases, the Buddha's response is to limit the sphere of influence exercised by *bhikkhunīs*. His response to complaints about *bhikkhu* behaviours is also to circumscribe those behaviours, but the rules do not limit *bhikkhu* influence. Rather, they provide a framework within which a *bhikkhu* can interact with the laity more effectively. For example, when Udāyin rubs against the wife of a *brahman* while showing them his dwelling, the Buddha does not prohibit *bhikkhus* from inviting women into their dwellings, but institutes a rule prohibiting bodily contact between a *bhikkhu* and a woman (*Saṅghādisesa* II).

The role of the people offended in the precedent stories appears to be definitional: they define the sphere of communal interactions of the *saṅgha* and, thereby, establish the location of the social boundaries around the *saṅgha*. But this sphere is not the same for *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. Where *bhikkhu* boundaries intersect with a wide variety of people, *bhikkhunīs* are presented in a much narrower social milieu. For the most part, *bhikkhunīs* appear to interact mainly within the *saṅgha* itself, and offend only their fellow *bhikkhunīs* with their misbehaviours.

Bhikkhunīs in the *Suttavibhaṅga* are thus presented as confined within the boundaries of the *saṅgha*. For *bhikkhus*, the interactions across the boundaries provide an opportunity to develop a sense of identity, to explore the parameters of renunciant behaviour in contrast with outsiders. The rules

function to guide that behaviour, not limit the interaction. For *bhikkhunīs*, the boundaries are prohibited; they are not guided in their behaviours with outsiders, they are inhibited from interacting. For *bhikkhunīs*, it is not the surrounding world of secular life that defines their identity, but their relationship to other renunciants.

This becomes more clear as we examine the role of *dāna* (gifts) in the precedent stories. As we have already seen in the frame narrative to the *Suttavibhanga* (*Pārājika* I 1.1-9), gifts function to define the boundary between the Buddha and normal folk. In giving, the *brahman* acknowledges truth of the Buddha's claim to superiority over everyone else. In the frame narratives to the *Pātimokkha* rules, the gift performs a similar function. In giving, the laity acknowledges the status of an individual *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhunī*.

In the *bhikkhu-vibhanga* the major problems arise in situations of scarcity, in situations where gifts are in short supply. *Pārājika* I is situated in a famine that sends Sudinna back to the locale of his parents. *Pārājika* II occurs when Dhaniya's hut is repeatedly destroyed by women. And, in *Pārājika* IV *bhikkhus* decide to deceive the laity as a solution to the prospect of hunger in the midst of another famine. In all three cases, a lack of lay support (intentional or not) leads *bhikkhus* into offense.

Other problems arise in the *bhikkhu-vibhanga* when *bhikkhus* abuse the generosity of their lay-supporters. For

example, in *Saṅghādisesa* IV, a woman expresses her willingness and ability to supply the *bhikkhu* Udāyin's needs for him. He replies that while robes, lodging, and alms are easy to come by, sexual intercourse is not. She is willing to oblige, but he spits at her, calls her names, and leaves. Justifiably upset, she complains to other women about his treatment, asking why he considers her inferior. *Bhikkhus* hear the complaints and report to the Buddha who rules it an offense to speak in praise of sexual intercourse.³⁷

In these cases and throughout the *bhikkhu-vibhaṅga* the support of the laity is never presented negatively. The problems arise not from the act of giving, but from inappropriate behaviour in the context of giving. The rules articulate guidelines to assist *bhikkhus* in behaving respectfully and avoiding entanglement with the concerns of lay-life.

In the *bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga*, however, it is the gift itself that causes problems. In *bhikkhunī Pārājika* I Sundarīnandā and Sālha come into contact because of his gift of a *vihāra*. Likewise, *bhikkhunī Saṅghādisesa* I revolves around the gift of a lay-person who subsequently dies leaving the gift open to

³⁷Note that in this case the rule does not reflect the complaint of the women. While they feel he has slighted the woman, the Buddha decides not against rudeness, but against speaking of sexual intercourse. There are several other situations in which the rule appears to have little to do with the context. For example, *Saṅghādisesa* VI presents *bhikkhus* straining the resources of their supporters with their explicit requests for items. The Buddha provides several *Jā-taka*-type tales to illustrate the dangers of this, but the rule has to do with establishing precise measurements for the building of huts.

dispute. In this case Thullanandā is reprimanded for claiming the gift that was given to them. *Saṅghādīsesa V* involves food given to Sundarīnandā by those who desire her.

In each case in the *bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga* the gift does not confirm the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha*'s identity, but brings it into jeopardy. In none of the cases is the problem with *bhikkhunī* behaviour towards the laity in the context of the gift. Rather, it is the gift itself that causes the problem.

The gift is one of the major demarcations of boundary margins. If the gift causes problems, the boundaries it marks will also be problematic. We see from this that the identity of the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha* is not as clear as that of the *bhikkhu-saṅgha*. The boundaries between layfolk and *bhikkhunīs* are fuzzy, poorly defined. All of the textual records of *bhikkhunī* interactions with the laity are clearly problematic. Not only do the laity appear less frequently as concerned about *bhikkhunī* behaviour, but the occasions in which *bhikkhunīs* conduct the normal business of the *saṅgha* with laity are fraught with problems. Unlike *bhikkhus* whose right to represent the *saṅgha* before the laity is never questioned, *bhikkhunīs* are not presented as qualified to represent the *saṅgha*. *Bhikkhunīs* are kept away from the outer perimeters of *saṅgha* life by the *Pātimokkha* code.

Bhikkhunīs are also prohibited from positions of authority within the *saṅgha* which define the contours of the boundaries themselves. The *garudhammā* rules prohibit *bhik-*

khunīs from spending the rainy season retreat (*vassa*) in a location apart from *bhikkhus* and require *bhikkhunīs* to ascertain the date of *uposatha* from *bhikkhus* (*Cullavagga* X 1.4, see also *bhikkhu Pācittiya* XXI 3). Moreover, the only *bhikkhu Saṅghādisesa* rules not pertaining to male sexuality that do not apply to *bhikkhunīs* both address the physical parameters of dwelling places.³⁸ *Bhikkhunīs*, therefore, are not responsible for establishing any of the social or physical boundaries of the *sangha*.

In fact, the expression of any authority of a *bhikkhunī* is presented as highly problematic in the *Suttavibhaṅga*. Thullanandā is consistently portrayed in the most serious offenses as a leader of *bhikkhunīs*. As we have seen, however, Thullanandā is not a paragon of virtue. Introduced in *Pārājika* I as the sister of Sundarīnandā who also appears frequently, Thullanandā is portrayed in *Pārājika* II as concealing Sundarīnandā's pregnancy and in *Pārājika* III as imitating the *bhikkhu* Ariṭṭha's false doctrine. She reappears in *Saṅghādisesa* I as the spokesperson on behalf of the *bhikkhunī-sangha* in the dispute over the store-house and in *Saṅghādisesa* II as accepting the *pabbajā* ordination of the condemned adulteress. In *Saṅghādisesa* IV Thullanandā resists the suspension of her pupil, Caṇḍakālī, then restores Caṇḍakālī's status after *bhikkhunīs* had suspended her. Finally, in

³⁸*Saṅghādisesa* VI, which prescribes measurements for the building of huts, and *Saṅghādisesa* VII, guidelines for choosing the site for a *vihāra*.

Sanḅhādīsesa IX, pupils of Thullanandā live together in disrepute and in *Sanḅhādīsesa* X Thullanandā is reprimanded for falsely asserting that her pupils' detractors actually live the lifestyle they accused of her pupils.

Throughout these accounts Thullanandā gains status (and notoriety). Initially introduced as one of four sisters, she speaks for the *bhikkhunī-saḅha*, then gains a pupil, then a group of them. She thus becomes a leader of women. But her leadership is not condoned in the text. She leads the way to disharmony and disrepute.

Thullanandā is clearly a stock character functioning to illustrate the qualities of poor leadership.³⁹ We find a

³⁹Thullanandā's association with poor leadership is confirmed in an interesting story in the *Mahāvastu*, "The Ordination of Mahākasyapa" (J.J. Jones, trans. *The Mahāvastu* Vol. III [London: Luzac and Co., 1956], pp. 45-56). In this story, though, it is Ānanda's poor leadership that is emphasized but Thullanandā supports Ānanda. Mahākasyapa derides Ānanda's leadership and calls him a boy (*kumaraka*). Ānanda points out his grey hair, challenging Mahākasyapa's insult. Thullanandā defends Ānanda saying,

Why does the venerable Mahā-Kasyapa, who formerly belonged to another sect, think it fit thrice to speak as to a youngster to the venerable Ānanda, the sage of Videha, the Exalted One's servitor, the Exalted One's attendant, the recipient of the right rules direct from the Exalted One's mouth? (p. 48)

Mahākasyapa accuses Thullanandā of thoughtlessness and conceit, to which Ānanda responds by asking Mahākasyapa's forgiveness, "for I am foolish, womanish [*matrigrāma*], witless, and lacking in common-sense" (p. 49).

Mahākasyapa then launches into an extended description of his ordination and teaching from the Buddha, claiming to have attained the perfect knowledge of an arhat at the end of eight days (p. 53). He also details his exchange of robes with the Buddha (p. 54) illustrating how the robes define his status as the Buddha's "genuine son" (*orasa mukhata jata*). Suitably impressed, the five hundred *bhikkhus* who were formerly Ānanda's disciples declare their allegiance to Mahākasyapa who

similar process of character-defamation at work in the *bhikkhu-vibhaṅga*. None of the characters of the *Pārājika* precedent stories is stock, but in the lower level offenses, Udāyin appears as a consistent trouble-maker. In *Saṅghādisesa* I, it is Udāyin who advises Seyyasaka to masturbate and Udāyin who rubs the wife of a *brahman* in *Saṅghādisesa* II. In *Saṅghādisesa* III, Udāyin offends with lewd words the women who have come to view his hut and in *Saṅghādisesa* IV offends another woman by requesting sexual intercourse then spurning her. Udāyin appears again in *Saṅghādisesa* V as a matchmaker and yet again in *Aniyata* I and II as the *bhikkhu* the *upāsikā* Visākhā reprimands for sitting in a secluded spot with a young woman.

Like Thullanandā, Udāyin appears to be a stock character associated with all the situations involving inappropriate contact with women. Unlike Thullanandā, however, Udāyin is not presented in a leadership role. He simply seems to have trouble dealing with women. Other characters are used in the *bhikkhu-vibhaṅga* to illustrate problematic leadership, but the characterization of the leaders differs from offense to offense. For example, *Saṅghādisesa* VIII and IX deal with followers of Mettiya and Bhummajaka who arrange for a *bhikkhuni*

then departs. He looks back, however, at the *bhikkhuni* Thullanandā. Thullanandā, a "depraved nun", exposes herself (*vivaram* [= ? *vivaranam*] *adasi*, p. 56) to Mahākasyapa and immediately dies to be reborn in one of the hells. For similar stories, see MN II 214-222 and the discussion in I.B. Horner, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism*, p. 297.

(also called Mettiyā -- clearly these are stock characters) to falsely charge the *bhikkhu* Dabba with assault. Similarly, *Saṅghādisesa* XIII presents the unscrupulous followers of Assaji and Punabbasu corrupting their lay supporters. The final case of bad leadership is Devadatta (*Saṅghādisesa* X and XI) who convinces some *bhikkhus* to follow his five propositions and create a schism.

The technique of using stock characters to represent the problems with bad leadership is maintained in both *vibhaṅgas*. But the *bhikkhu-vibhaṅga* tempers its presentation of bad leaders with the characterization of more esteemed and praiseworthy leaders. For example, Dabba is designated by the Buddha as responsible for assigning lodging and distributing meals (*Saṅghādisesa* VIII). The problem that arises in this case is not Dabba's faulty leadership, but the jealousy and resentment expressed by the followers of Mettiya and Bhumma-jaka. It is, in other words, their failure to accept Dabba's leadership that causes the problem.⁴⁰

In the *bhikkhu-vibhaṅga* problems do not arise from the fact of leadership, but from its abuse. In the *bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga* the problem appears to be leadership itself. There

⁴⁰See also *Sāṅghādisesa* VI where Mahākassapa assumes a leadership role in reporting to the Buddha the alienation of supporters by *bhikkhus* asking too much of them and *Sāṅghādisesa* XIII where Sāriputta and Moggallāna are sent with a body-guard of *bhikkhus* to banish the corrupt *bhikkhus* who bring families into disrepute. Ānanda does not appear in these accounts as a leader except, perhaps, in *Pārājika* III where he informs the Buddha of the murder of *bhikkhus*.

are no positive characterizations of a leader of *bhikkhunīs*.

The implication of this consistent presentation in the *vibhaṅgas* is that *bhikkhunīs* should not act as leaders, but should accept the leadership of *bhikkhus*. Even then, however, *bhikkhunīs* stray into dangerous territory. *Bhikkhu Saṅghādisesa VIII* (1.8-9) presents the interesting story of corrupt *bhikkhus* instructing the *bhikkhunī* Mettiyā to charge Dabba with assault. In the story, Mettiyā does not question their instructions, but dutifully follows orders. When the charge has been made, the Buddha questions Dabba who claims innocence. The Buddha then orders *bhikkhus* to expel Mettiyā (*bhikkhave Mettiyaṃ bhikkhuniṃ nāsetha*). The corrupt *bhikkhus* speak up for her, informing the Buddha that she had simply followed their orders.

As Horner points out, this hasty command on the part of the Buddha is uncharacteristic. In all other cases, Horner claims, he asks the perpetrator if the accusation is true.⁴¹ Here, I think Horner has missed a vital piece of evidence. In every case in the *Pārājika* and *Saṅghādisesa* offenses specific to *bhikkhunīs* the Buddha questions *bhikkhus* as to the truth of the accusation. He does not speak directly to *bhikkhunīs*. She is right, though, that in the case of Mettiyā the Buddha does not even question *bhikkhus* about the truth.

⁴¹BD I, p. 280, n. 3. See also *Women Under Primitive Buddhism*, pp. 266-267. Horner attributes this anomaly to "monkish gloss".

The concern expressed in this story is clearly not the bad leadership provided to Mettiyā by the corrupt *bhikkhus*. Nor is it Mettiyā's blithe acceptance of their right to command her obedience. But these issues are of great concern to us. They confirm the perspective we have seen developed in both *vibhaṅgas* regarding *bhikkhunī* leadership. The assumption in both *vibhaṅgas* is that a *bhikkhunī* should obey *bhikkhus* regardless of the absurdity of their command and its consequences for her future in the *sangha*. In contrast, the leadership of women is presented in the *bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga* as inherently flawed.

This analysis confirms our previous findings about the tension that is maintained in *Vinaya* texts between the *bhikkhunī-sangha* as simultaneously autonomous from, yet encapsulated within, the *bhikkhu-sangha*. It is this tension that underlies the ambiguous presentation of *bhikkhunīs* throughout the *Vinaya*.

The result of this unequal treatment is a differing level of emphasis on the boundaries that define the communities. Where the *bhikkhu-vibhaṅga* establishes clear boundaries between the *bhikkhu-sangha* and non-renunciant folks, the *bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga* blurs the distinctions between the *bhikkhunī sangha* and the lay community outside. The rules of the *bhikkhunī-Pātimokkha* do not articulate clear boundaries between *bhikkhunīs* and the outside community, but circumscribe their interactions with that community. In so doing, the

bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga does not develop a model of the ideal renunciant identity for *bhikkhunīs*.

Clearly, the corporate identity of the *bhikkhunī-sangha* is a problem within the symbol system of the *Vinaya*. The reason for this is that the process of boundary-weakening works both ways: insofar as *bhikkhunīs* are only problematically distinct from lay-folk, so are *bhikkhunīs* problematically distinct from *bhikkhus*. They dress the same, behave the same, follow most of the same rules, and, from the perspective of the laity, represent the Buddha's *dhamma* in the same way. If the *bhikkhunī-sangha* blurs the boundary between renunciant and lay life, the consequences will affect the *bhikkhu-sangha* as well.

Perhaps we can envision this process as two intersecting circles, one representing the city, the other the *sangha*. The point of overlap is the *bhikkhunī-sangha*, which thus shares membership in both camps. There are boundaries that confine the overlap, but these boundaries cannot be as solid or as clearly delineated as the boundaries on the outside of the circles.

This picture helps us understand the tension we have found in the perspective of the texts between distance and enclosure with regard to *bhikkhunīs*. Given the extreme concern for boundary definition and maintenance we have discovered in the *bhikkhu-vibhaṅga*, this shaded area inhabited by *bhikkhunīs* could pose nothing but a constant source of

anxiety and tension within the symbolic universe of the Vinaya. It represents the extension of the physical and social parameters of the *sangha* into the territory of the secular world. As such, it weakens the boundaries themselves and threatens incursions from the secular world within the hallowed space of the *sangha*.

CHAPTER V

The Logic of Boundaries:

Identity and the Decline of *Dhamma*

The *Vinaya* as I have analyzed it thus far has presented a story of the transference of the Buddha's *bodhi* onto the corporate body of the *sangha* and the personal body of the *bhikkhu*. This story has a beginning--the Buddha's enlightenment and its expansion--and a middle--the creation of boundaries that confirm and protect the community and the individual. From a literary perspective, it also has an end.¹ The last four chapters of the *Khandhakas* (*Cullavagga* IX-XII)

¹In my analysis of the "Vinaya story" I follow the lead of Erich Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* (see above, pp. 73-75), though I differ from him in emphasizing literary rather than historical or chronological features of the *Vinaya's* usage of the Buddha biography. Frauwallner also focuses exclusively on the council accounts, overlooking the closure accomplished by *Cullavagga* IX and X (pp. 153-154). My analysis is supported by Buddhaghosa's assumption of the importance of beginnings and endings. In his long discussion of the first council, Buddhaghosa highlights the authority and completeness of the Pali canon (the three baskets, the *Vinayapitaka*, *Suttapitaka*, and *Abhidhammapitaka*): "all of this has three divisions, the first words of the Buddha, the intermediate words of the Buddha, and the last words of the Buddha" (*sabbam eva h'idam pathamabuddhavacanam majjhimabuddhavacanam pacchimabuddhavacanam to tippabhedam hoti*). N.A. Jayawickrama, ed. and trans., *The Inception of Discipline and the Vinaya Nidāna* (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 147-148; for his translation, see p. 14.

depict the symbolic closure of the story of transference: in *Cullavagga IX*, the Buddha symbolically abdicates his position as head of the *sangha* by refusing to perform the *uposatha* rite; in *Cullavagga X*, women are ordained, thus completing the four assemblies; in *Cullavagga XI* (the "first council"), the Buddha dies (attains *parinibbāna*) and a group of *bhikkhus* ratify themselves as his representatives; and in *Cullavagga XII* (the "second council"), this ratification is tested and proven in a situation of potential schism. By the end of the *Khandhakas*, the transference of identity is complete. The Buddha has fully consigned his authority to the *sangha* and it has resolved for itself and tested the contours of that authority.

The characteristics of the identity of an enlightened being are consistent throughout the story, whether they apply to the Buddha himself or to the *sangha* that emulates him. The sphere of enlightenment transcends space and time; it is cosmic in its dimensions. As long as the boundaries between the sphere of *bodhi* and the defiling world of *samsāra* remain intact, however, it can be embodied by a pure community (the *Cātuddisasangha*) and by a pure individual (the ideal *bhikkhu*). The definitive characteristic of enlightenment is complete purity which must pervade the entire community and the whole individual. Physical containment, social detachment, and psychological control are vital components of purity at both a communal and an individual level.

As we have seen, however, this condition of complete purity is very vulnerable. A breaching of the boundaries at an individual level intrudes upon the purity of the community and the structure of the cosmos. In the *Vinaya* there are two occasions in which the cosmos shakes. The first is when Koṇḍañña enters the Buddha's sphere of enlightenment by attaining the *dhammacakka* (*Maṇḍavagga* I 6.37), and the second is when Sudinna impregnates his former wife (*Pārājika* I 5.9). Both situations involve the breaching of boundaries that were previously impervious, though the first is clearly positive (the origination of the *sangha*) and the second clearly negative (the beginning of the decline of *brahmacariya*).

It is this vulnerability to rupture and concomitant defilement that explains the extreme emphasis on boundary formation and maintenance throughout the *Vinaya*. The boundary between pure and impure is fragile and must be fortified. As is clear in the frame narrative to the *Suttavibhaṅga*, however, the boundaries are destined to collapse. The *brahmacariya* will decline, as it has in past aeons under previous Buddhas (*Pārājika* I 3).² The point of *Pātimokkha* is not to nullify

²Here and throughout this chapter I use the term "decline" to refer to the breakdown of *brahmacariya* and the expected demise of *saddhamma* as it is used in the *Vinaya*. The idea of inevitable decline in other Pali sources refers to the cosmic cycle of evolution and devolution during vast periods of time. See, for example, the *Aggañña Sutta* (DN III, no. 27) and the *Cakkavatti-sihanāda Sutta* (DN III, no. 26). For a discussion of the role of decline throughout Buddhist history and textual transmissions, see Jan Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991).

the decline, but to postpone it for as long as possible. This is the explicit rationale for instituting the individual rules of the *Pātimokkha* code.

The postponement of decline is also the implicit rationale for the *Vinaya* as a whole. When we look at the *Vinaya* as a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end, we see that at key points in the story the threat of impurity explains and justifies the need for stronger boundaries. The Buddha is convinced initially to teach because of the existence of an impure (*asuddha*) *dhamma* in Magadha (*Mahāvagga* I 5.6). It is this decision that leads him to open up his sphere of enlightenment to Koṇḍañña, and consequently, the disturbance to the cosmos. Similarly, it is the entrance of impurity (*asuddha*) that marks both the necessity of instituting the *Pātimokkha* and the beginning of the decline of *brahmacariya*. Again, the event is accompanied by a disturbance to the cosmos.

The logic of the *Vinaya* as a document establishing clear

According to Nattier, differing notions of decline and its causes lead to differing responses from the traditions that maintain them. For Theravāda Buddhists, the idea of inevitable decline leads to "a fierce conservatism, devoted to the preservation for as long as possible of the Buddha's teachings in their original form. Set within the cosmological framework ... (according to which ours is an age of general decline) and anticipating the disappearance of the Dharma within a finite number of centuries, this historical outlook views change of any kind as being -- by definition -- change for the worse. Thus the impulse to preservation (and, accordingly, the tendency to deny any change that may actually have taken place) is both understandable and expected" (p. 137).

parameters and characteristics of the lifestyle of renunciation is based on opposition to the realm of the impure. The rules are presented as a necessary bulwark against incursion of this impurity into the figurative space of the *sangha* (the body, speech, or mind of an individual or the community as a whole). Any incursion at an individual or a communal level will threaten the whole structure, with devastating repercussions for the enlightened state of being it manifests: the pure lifestyle (*brahmacariya*) will be jeopardized and the true *dhamma* (*saddhamma*) will falter.

As we have seen throughout our analysis, this opposition has serious implications for the treatment of *bhikkhunīs* in the *Vinaya*. Women are consistently associated with the household life and its impurity. Yasa, who functions as a paradigm for renunciation, leaves the realm of women when he exits the city gates on his way to see the Buddha (*Mahāvagga* I 7.2). Sudinna initiates the beginning of decline of the *brahmacariya* by engaging in sexual intercourse with his former wife (*Pārājika* I 5.9).³ This association between women and the threatening realm of impurity continues in the *sangha*: *bhikkhunīs* are systematically excluded from the "circle of the pure" which conducts *sangha* business; *bhikkhunīs* are discour-

³Note however, that in both cases, it is the mother, not the wife, who poses the greatest threat to the renunciant lifestyle. This presentation of mothers is consistent in the *Vinaya*. *Mahāpajāpatī*, the Buddha's foster mother, is the character representing women's drive for ordination, the success of which precipitates the premature decline in both *brahmacariya* and *saddhamma*.

aged from cross-border interactions; and *bhikkhunīs* are disqualified from the positions of authority responsible for designating and maintaining the physical and social boundaries around the *sangha*.

In this chapter I conclude my discussion of the process of identity formation and its opposition to *bhikkhunīs* by analyzing the final chapters of the *Khandhakas*. First I focus on the account of the first council (*Cullavagga XI*). Here I argue that the council account condenses the process of transference of the Buddha's *bodhi* from his person to the corporate unit of the *sangha*. By the end of the account, the transference is complete and the convened *sangha* has authorized itself as the Buddha's representative. In condensing the process, the account also presents, in very compact form, the key elements of the *Vinaya's* development of an ideal renunciant identity: purity, separation, and hierarchy dominate the account.

Furthermore, like the *Vinaya* it condenses, the account explicitly refers to the concept of decline to justify its refortification of the *sangha's* boundaries. Thus, I argue, this rationale pervades every important component of the *Vinaya*.

In the second section, I examine the role this rationale plays in the overall structure of the *Vinaya*. My argument here is that the concept of decline performs certain useful functions in the codification of the *Vinaya* as a whole.

Decline is a textual strategy legitimating the particular vision of the enlightened being which pervades the *Vinaya*. Because of the threat of decline, boundaries are necessary. The logic of boundaries is the consolidation of power, the validation and authorization of one perspective.

The implication of this logic is that the Mahāpajāpatī story is best understood within a context of decline. It is placed at the very end of the internal chronology of the *Vinaya*, right before the Buddha's death is announced in the first council. Moreover, it follows immediately after *Cullavagga IX*, which presents the symbolic abdication of the Buddha and the metaphoric conclusion of the expansion of his enlightenment. Just as Mahāpajāpatī is situated outside the gate to the *sangha*, as *bhikkhunīs* are situated outside the perimeter of full membership, so the story of women's ordination is situated outside the narrative frame which encapsulates the expansion and closure of the sphere of enlightenment.

Back to the Beginning: Boundaries in the First Council

The focus and format of the first council account (*Cullavagga XI*) differ dramatically from the narratives of the *Vinaya* that precede it. In distinction from all other chapters of the *Vinaya* (except the "second council" following it), the council account focuses not on the rules of the *Vinaya*, but on their codification. Though numerous and

interesting differences are evident in the account preserved in different schools,⁴ this focus is consistent in all recensions. For example, though Étienne Lamotte questions the historicity of the account, he concludes,

in the first century after the Nirvāṇa, one or more groups of specialists, whether assembled in council or not, attempted to codify the word of the Buddha in both the field of doctrine [*dhamma*] and in the field of discipline [*vinaya*] and... they succeeded in elaborating a coherent dharma and prātimokṣa, which were accepted as a whole by the early community and which constituted the common heritage of the Buddhist sects which were subsequently to develop.⁵

The Pali account presents eminent leaders of the *bhikkhu-sangha* gathering for the first rainy season following the Buddha's death in order to establish the true *dhamma* and *Vinaya*, "before non-*dhamma* (*adhama*) shines forth and *dhamma* should be withheld, before non-*vinaya* (*avinaya*) shines forth and *vinaya* should be withheld, before those who speak non-*dhamma* become strong and those who speak *dhamma* become weak,

⁴An account of a gathering of the foremost disciples shortly after the Buddha's death is found in all the *Vinayas* still extant. For textual citations and a study of differences between recensions, see Andre Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955); Teitaro Suzuki, "The First Buddhist Council" (*Monist* 14 [1904]: 253-283); Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka Era* (trans. by Sara Webb-Boin, Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1988), pp. 133-140; and Michael Freedman's summary of the recensions and scholarship, "Ānanda in the Theravāda", pp. 442-485.

⁵Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, p. 140. Lamotte voices the scholarly majority in questioning the historicity of the proceedings recorded in the account. For discussion and citations, see Charles Prebish, "A Review of Scholarship on the Buddhist Councils" (*Journal of Asian Studies* 35 [1974]: 239-254).

before those who speak non-vinaya become strong and those who speak vinaya become weak" (Cullavagga XI 1.1).⁶

The account is thus expressly devoted to the codification of the canon, to establish authentic *dhamma* and authentic *Vinaya*. The account clearly functions as a strategy of legitimation for the canon in which it is embedded.⁷ Not surprisingly, the account also employs internal tactics which demonstrate its authority: like the rest of the *Vinaya*, the account presents its leading characters as perfectly pure, fully separate, and well-controlled within a systematic hierarchy. Its *raison d'être* is also similar to other *Vinaya* narratives we have discussed. The conclave gathers as a direct response to the threat of defilement entering the *sangha*.

The account opens abruptly with Mahākassapa informing a group of *bhikkhus* of the Buddha's death, the means by which he hears of it, and the initial response of *bhikkhus* with whom he

⁶*pure adhammo dippati dhammo patibāhiyati, avinayo dippati vinayo patibāhiyati, pure adhammavādino balavanto honto dhammavādino dubbalā honti, avinayavādino balavanto honti vinayavādino dubbalā honti.*

⁷Interestingly, differing accounts of the first council have been used by each school to authenticate its particular canon. The condensed nature of the account lends itself to divergent interpretations. As we shall see, the texts that comprise each canon are referred to only in summary with cursory references. Later commentators are left thereby to infer their own texts. For a discussion of this process, see Jean Przyluski, *The Legend of Emperor Aśoka in Indian and Chinese Texts* (trans. by Dilip Gishwas, Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1967), pp. 27-29; Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, p. 140; or Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 27.

was travelling.⁸ He is notified of the death by a passing *Ājīvaka* who had picked up a *mandārava* flower which fell from the heavens at the Buddha's death. *Bhikkhus* respond differently to the news: those who are not *arahants* express extreme grief; *arahants* remain calm; and one named Subhadda expresses relief that now that they are rid of the Buddha they no longer have to follow any rules.

Mahākassapa then proposes to his audience that they gather to proclaim (*saṃgāyāma*) true *dhamma* and *Vinaya*. He selects 499 *arahants* and is convinced to include Ānanda, though he is still in training (*sekha*). These elders (*thera*) decide on Rājagaha as the locale for their retreat, agree to exclude all other *bhikkhus*, and spend the first month repairing the premises. The night before the assembly, Ānanda attains freedom from the *āsavas*, thereby becoming an *arahant*. The recitation itself consists of Mahākassapa questioning, first, Upāli about the location, infractor and subject of each *Pātimokkha* offense for both *Vinayas*,⁹ then Ānanda about the

⁸This abrupt introduction to the account, which opens with the word "then" (*atha*), has led scholars to speculate that at one time the account was merged with the *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta* (DN II, no. 16) which records the final events of the Buddha's life, his death, and his funeral arrangements. See, in particular, Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya*, pp. 44-45.

⁹By "both *Vinayas*" (*ubhatovinaya*) the text apparently means both the *bhikkhu* and the *bhikkhunī Pātimokkha* codes. See Horner, *BD V*, p. 397, n. 2 and Buddhaghosa, *Inception of Discipline*, p. 146. Actually, Mahākassapa questions Upāli in detail only about the four *Pārājika* offenses; the rest of the *Pātimokkha* is assumed in the reference to "both *Vinayas*". Similarly, when he questions Ānanda about *dhamma*, he refers

location of the Buddha and his audience at the time of uttering the *suttas*.

Unprompted, Ānanda then informs the assembly of the Buddha's decision that they could rescind the "lesser and minor" rules of training (*khuddānukhuddaka sikkhāpada*) if they so wished.¹⁰ This results in a flurry of controversy as Ānanda had neglected to obtain exact specifications as to the nature of these *sikkhāpada*. Mahākassapa restores order, proposing that they make no changes as this would antagonize the laity. The elders then reprimand Ānanda for five offenses of wrong-doing (*dukkata*). He confesses to each of them, but he does not agree that his actions constitute offenses: (1) he failed to determine the specifications of the lesser and minor *sikkhāpada*; (2) he stepped on the Buddha's cloak while sewing it; (3) he allowed women to view the Buddha's body first which resulted in its being soiled (*makkhita*) with tears;¹¹ (4) he did not ask the Buddha to use his psychic powers to prolong his life;¹² and (5) he intervened on behalf of women to allow

specifically only to the *Brahmajāla Sutta* and the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, the first two *suttas* of the *Dighanikāya*.

¹⁰This is recorded in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN II.154).

¹¹The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* does not refer to this in its record of the Buddha's death and funeral arrangements (DN II.156-167).

¹²According to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, the Buddha deliberately gave Ānanda the clear message that as a Buddha, he could extend his life. Ānanda ignored the hint (DN II.104). Later, when the Buddha had resolved to die, Ānanda asks him to extend his life, but Ānanda's request came too

their entry into the *sangha*.

The scene then shifts abruptly to the appearance of Purāṇa with 500 *bhikkhus*. The elders invite Purāṇa to chant with them, but he politely refuses, saying he prefers to remember the Buddha's *dhamma* and *Vinaya* as he himself has heard them. Again the scene shifts and Ānanda informs the assembly of the Buddha's request to impose a *brahmadāṇḍa* penalty on Channa. The elders send Ānanda with 500 *bhikkhus* to enjoin the penalty, a virtual shunning. Ānanda stops on the way, teaches *dhamma* to women in King Udena's harem (*orodha*) and to the king himself. He receives 500 robes from the women and 500 more from King Udena. He then continues his trip and imposes the penalty on Channa. Upon hearing the shunning he will experience, Channa faints, then meditates and attains the state of *arahant*. Ānanda revokes the penalty and the account ends.

This account condenses the content and sequence of the whole of the *Khandhakas* which precedes it. A reference to the Buddha biography (in this case, its conclusion) opens the account as it opens the *Khandhakas* (*Mahāvagga* I 1-5). Likewise, the account refers to the impact on celestial regions of events in the Buddha's life (the notice of various deities and their gifts) and death (the *mandārava* flower descending from the heavens). The decision to proclaim *dhamma* and *vinaya* is prompted in both cases by the threat of *adhamma*

late (DN II.115).

(Brahmā's reference to the "unclean *dhamma*" and Mahākassapa's desire to protect true *dhamma*), and the first action in each text involves the admission of selected persons. Furthermore, just as these people all become *arahants* immediately upon entry into the *sangha* (*Mahāvagga* I 6-10), so are all the participants in the council *arahants*.¹³

We remember that after the section on admission and ordination, the *Mahāvagga* discusses the major monthly and annual rituals of the *sangha*, *uposatha*, *pavāraṇā*, and *kāṭhina* (*Mahāvagga* II-VII). As we have seen, the *uposatha* rite includes specifications for boundaries (*sīmā*) to enclose it and procedures for the recitation of *Pātimokkha*. The *pavāraṇā* consists of a ritual confession of wrong-doings over the rainy season retreat (*vassa*) and the *kāṭhina* rite involves the gift of robe materials from the laity to the *sangha* at the end of the rainy season. The first council account includes these elements as well. After the selection of the elders admitted into the council, the elders establish the social and physical parameters of the meeting venue, excluding all but the council members and repairing the premises. They then recite the

¹³Note, however, that Ānanda does not become an *arahant* until the night before the assembly. As the only non-*arahant* chosen to participate, his presence is anomalous. For a discussion of this and other anomalies associated with the character of Ānanda, see Michael Freedman, "Ānanda in the Theravāda", pp. 442-485 and Ellison Banks Findly, "Ānanda's Hindrance: Faith (*saddhā*) in Early Buddhism" (*Journal of Indian Philosophy* 20 [1992]: 253-273).

Pātimokkha and require Ānanda to confess his offenses.¹⁴ These events are slightly different from the *uposatha*, *simā*, and *pavāraṇā*, but are clearly similar in structure and function. Similarly, the *kāthina* rite does not appear as such, but Ananda does receive a large donation of robes. In short, the first council account incorporates in very condensed form the whole ritual life of the *sangha* as it is prescribed in the *Mahāvagga*.

The account also summarizes the function of local *sanghas* in interacting with "other communions" (*nānāsaṅvāsaka*) and in punishing and rehabilitating offenders (*Mahāvagga X, Cullavagga I-IV*). Purāṇa and his group of 500 are welcomed, but their right to refuse to join the recital is not questioned.¹⁵ In the first council, Ānanda is delegated to punish Channa with the *brahmadanda*,¹⁶ but the punishment is automatically

¹⁴This "trial" of Ānanda has been interpreted by many scholars as the chronological "core" of the first council account. See Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "The Buddhist Councils" (*Indian Antiquary* 37 [1908]: 1-18 and 81-106), pp. 11-12 and Bareau, *Les premiers conciles*, pp. 14-15. Jean Przyluski focuses on the account as it is preserved in *sūtras* rather than in *Vinayas*, arguing that the account reflects legendary themes associated with the seasonal rituals of the rains. At the conclusion of these rituals, Przyluski contends, the community purified itself by the reprimand and expulsion of a scapegoat, here personified by Ānanda. *Le Concile de Rājagṛha* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1926), p. 372, and especially, Chapter II, pp. 257-278.

¹⁵This incident with Purāṇa is another of the features of the account that scholars have argued marks its antiquity. See La Vallée Poussin, "The Buddhist Councils", p. 17.

¹⁶The *brahmadanda* is mentioned nowhere else in the *Vinaya*. However, the Buddha's request for Ānanda to impose the penalty does appear in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN II.154). See my

revoked when Channa becomes an arahant.¹⁷

The first council account thus presents the content and sequence of much of the *Khandhakas*. In so doing, it reflects the same emphasis on the characteristics of the enlightened being and the transference of those characteristics onto the *sangha*. The purity that defines that being also defines the convened *sangha*; the *sangha* is composed entirely of arahants (at least for the actual business of the meeting). The separation from worldly concerns and external defilement required to maintain the purity of the enlightened being is maintained by the council. The meeting is physically bounded, socially isolated, and emotionally detached.¹⁸ And, the hierarchy that both establishes and expresses the separation and purity of the enlightened being is clearly emphasized in the council account. The conclave is composed entirely of elders (*thera*) within the *sangha* and is firmly under the leadership of Mahākassapa who not only convenes the meeting and selects participants, but also delegates himself as the chairperson who questions Upāli and Ānanda to prompt their recital of

discussion above, pp.142-143.

¹⁷This automatic revocation is also unheard of throughout the *Vinaya*. This incident has caused scholars to question the philosophical basis for the reprimand of Ānanda, which occurs after he has become an arahant. For a discussion of the issues and a summary of scholarly positions, see Michael Freedman, "Ānanda in the Theravāda", pp. 468-470 and Ellison Banks Findly, "Ānanda's Hindrance".

¹⁸This is clear from Mahākassapa's description of the calm response of passionless (*vītarāga*) *bhikkhus* to news of the Buddha's *parinibbāna* (*Cullavagga* XI 1.1).

Vinaya and *dhamma*.

The convened *sangha* personifies the attributes of the Buddha as they are developed throughout the *Vinaya*. It assumes the identity of an enlightened being. It also assumes the authority implicit in that identity. Throughout the account, we can detect textual strategies that affirm and consolidate this authority. These strategies are most evident in the characterization and treatment of Ānanda.

When Mahākassapa selects *bhikkhus* to participate in the assembly, he chooses only *arahants*. Ānanda is included only at the instigation of unspecified *bhikkhus* who argue that, "though he is still in training, Ānanda is incapable of entering into wrong-doing through desire, delusion, anger or fear and he has learned by heart much *dhamma* and *vinaya* in the presence of the Buddha" (*Cullavagga* XI 1.2).¹⁹ Ānanda is thus presented as the one imperfection in a "perfected" or pure group of the elite elders (*thera*). He has not attained the complete detachment that characterizes an *arahant*, nor does he fit into the hierarchical scheme designed by Mahākassapa since his inclusion results from the pressure of unspecified *bhikkhus*.

Ānanda, known throughout Buddhist literature as the subordinate attendant of the Buddha, becomes in this account

¹⁹*Ānando kiñ cāpi sedho abhabbo chandā dosā mohā bhayā agatim gantum bahu ca tena bhagavato santike dhammo ca vinayo ca pariyatto.*

the subordinate servant of the conclave.²⁰ His anomalous inclusion in the conclave illustrates this as does his subsequent treatment. The text not only subordinates Ānanda, but it also presents him transferring his loyalties from the Buddha to the *sangha*. This process begins with his attainment of arahant hood.

The night before the meeting, Ānanda himself recognizes the anomaly of his presence, thinking, "it is not proper to me that I being a learner should attend the assembly" (*Cullavagga* XI 1.6).²¹ He then devotes the night to meditation on the body (*kāyagatāya sati*) and attains the state of arahant. The imperfection of his non-arahant status is thus amended, but he

²⁰See the discussion above, pp. 43-47. As is the case throughout the Pali canon, Ānanda's role in the first council is not without incongruity. He is clearly subordinate in the account. Yet, as the Buddha's constant companion for twenty-five years, he is uniquely qualified to recite both *dhamma* and *vinaya*. He is generally recognized for his wide knowledge (*bhussuta*) of the Buddha's teachings. Mahākassapa's attempt to exclude him from the conclave thus reveals a concern for something other than establishing true *buddhavacana* (the words of the Buddha), which Ānanda would know better than anyone else. Other scholars have also noted this incongruity, but they explain it with reference to the predilections of later times (Freedman, pp. 495-498), or differing schools (Jean Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha* [Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1926], pp. 138-140, 208 and throughout). According to these theories, the division between specialists in the categories of Buddhist literature led to differing hagiographical figures who symbolized the efficacy of their particular specialization. Thus, while specialists in *dhamma* or *sutta* focused on Ānanda as the first of the *bhussutas*, specialists in *Vinaya* focussed on Mahākassapa as the epitome of ascetic practice. Within the Pali *Vinaya*, Mahākassapa clearly dominates.

²¹*na kho me taṃ paṭirūpaṃ yo 'ham sekho samāno sannipātaṃ gaccheyyan.*

and the *dhamma* he represents are still subordinate. Regardless of the fact that the text describes the meeting as the "recital of *dhamma* and *vinaya*", Upāli's recitation of *Vinaya* precedes Ānanda's recitation of *dhamma*.²²

Ānanda's actions confirm the subtle denigration of his character implied in this subordination. After his recitation, he undermines Mahākassapa's authority, speaking for the first time without prompting. He informs the conclave of the Buddha's decision that they could rescind the lesser and minor *sikkhāpada*. Until this point, the proceedings had been formally structured under the control of Mahākassapa. They had also been very orderly, with every decision receiving the consensus of silence. Ānanda's news creates a flurry of controversy among *bhikkhus* arguing differing interpretations

²²Some recensions reverse this order of recital, indicating sectarian divisions as to the relative importance of *Vinaya* and *dhamma*. Dhirasekera explains how the contrast between the Mahāsāṅghika account's priority of *dhamma* reflects its relatively lax attitude towards *Vinaya*. In stark contrast is "the Theriya tradition which seems to emphasise more the importance of the *Vinaya*. Considering the attempts made by them to safeguard the proper maintenance of monastic discipline at all stages in the history of the *Sāsana* it could unhesitatingly be said of them that they had a very high regard for the *Vinaya*." *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 168. Buddhaghosa reflects this "high regard", explaining that Mahākassapa had asked the assembly which should come first, *dhamma* or *Vinaya*. They reply that *Vinaya* must precede *dhamma* as it constitutes the very life (*āyu*) of the Buddha's teachings (*sāsana*). *Inception of Discipline*, p. 144. This precedence is also evident at the end of the first council account, where it refers to itself as the "chanting of *Vinaya*" (*vinayaśaṅgīti*, *Cullavagga* XI 1.16).

of what actually constitutes these "lesser and minor" rules.²³ Mahākassapa restores order, proposing that they change nothing, for, if they were to do so, the supporting laity would be critical of their change in behaviour after the Buddha's death (*Cullavagga* XI 1.9).

This is the first invocation of the laity. It is extremely effective in restoring order and decorum. The *sangha*, like the Buddha, is very concerned with its image before the laity. Any relaxation of the *Pātimokkha* code will jeopardize the *sangha's* relations with the laity. Ānanda's overturning of Mahākassapa's leadership role is accompanied by the threat of the overturning of the *sangha's* status with the laity; it threatens to breach the boundaries between *sangha* and household life that are maintained by the *Pātimokkha* rules.

Here we see the significance of the text's emphasis on Ānanda's learner status at the time of his inclusion into the conclave. Because he was not perfectly pure, he brought impurity into the conclave with him. This impurity results in the challenge to authority he represents and the threat to the

²³As Dhirasekera points out, this confusion about what constitutes the lesser and minor *sikkhāpada* is odd since *Pācittiya* 72 explicitly rules against *bhikkhus* speaking disparagingly of them. According to a passage in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the "lesser and minor" rules include all but the four *Pārājikas* (AN I.231f.). *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, pp. 164-166. Dhirasekera interprets the presentation of Buddha's decision to rescind these rules as a last ditch attempt by dissidents to push their perspective. The episode, he hints, is probably of later origin than the rest of the *Vinaya* (p. 170).

boundaries he introduces. His impurity is amended somewhat by his attainment of *nibbāna*, but its residual effects still have the power to contaminate the proceedings.²⁴

The conclave purifies itself of this contamination by reprimanding Ānanda for his offenses of wrong-doing (*dukkata*), all of which he committed prior to his attainment of *nibbāna*. In these offenses we see confirmation of the *Vinaya's* emphasis on purity, separation, and hierarchy. Ānanda's failure to obtain specifications for the lesser and minor rules of training threatens the separation between the *sangha* and the laity, thereby jeopardizing the *sangha's* status. His defilement of the Buddha's rain-cloth is clearly related to purity, as is his offense in allowing women to weep on the Buddha's body. This latter offense also reflects Ānanda's rejection of the "proper" hierarchy of men over women: the offense is not only that the Buddha's body was defiled by women's tears, but that he allowed women to honour the body first (*paṭhama*). Similarly, in arguing with the Buddha for the ordination of women, Ānanda introduces feminine impurity into the *sangha* and challenges the Buddha's authority. When he refrains from asking the Buddha to extend his lifetime, Ānanda undermines

²⁴Note how this confirms my analysis about the relatively low priority given to soteriological capabilities in the requirements for admission (pp. 116-117). People who are "impure" (that is, not physically whole) have the ability to attain *nibbāna*, but they are not to be admitted into the *sangha* (*Mahāvagga* I 39-71). With its presentation of Ānanda, the first council account explains symbolically how the entry of an impure person can defile the *sangha*, despite his ability to attain *nibbāna*.

this authority even more, failing to recognize the Buddha's special powers.

By reprimanding Ānanda, the conclave expresses and confirms the necessity of maintaining purity, separation, and hierarchy. Ānanda's confession of the offenses implies his acceptance of their importance and also his acknowledgement of the authority of the conclave. In its concern for purity, separation, and hierarchy, the conclave has placed Ānanda's offenses against the Buddha as equal in importance to those against the integrity of the *sangha*. The conclave has taken the symbolic purity of the Buddha and transferred it to itself. In so doing, it has also transferred the Buddha's authority to itself.

Ānanda is reprimanded in person by the Buddha for only one of these offenses, though four of the five offenses occurred during the Buddha's lifetime.²⁵ Instead, the conclave takes this task on for itself; it replaces the Buddha as Ānanda's superior. By accepting the reprimands and confessing his faults, Ānanda acknowledges the validity of this replacement. He disagrees with the substance of each reprimand, but,

²⁵In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN II 112-118), Ānanda ignores the Buddha's hint, but later in the text asks him three times to prolong his life. The Buddha replies that he is too late with his request, then rebukes Ānanda for persistence after he had been refused. This rebuke makes the Buddha's failure to reprimand Ānanda for his persistence in the *Mahāpajāpatī* story all the more remarkable. See my discussion above, pp. 56-58. According to Ellison Findly, the central issue in this and other rebukes by the Buddha to Ānanda centre on Ānanda's faith (*saddhā*).

nonetheless, confesses "out of faith (*saddhā*) in the elders (*āyasmant*)".²⁶ In so doing, Ānanda symbolically confirms both Mahākassapa's initial reluctance to include him, and the assertion of the *bhikkhus* that he is incapable of serious wrong-doing.

In essence, Ānanda personifies a very different attitude towards the renunciant lifestyle than that which pervades the *Vinaya*. The presentation of Ānanda in the first council reflects an acknowledgement of this differing perspective, but, simultaneously, an undermining of this perspective. Ānanda does not see his offenses as such because his intentions were pure: he was unmindful (*asati*) when he neglected to obtain the specifications of the lesser and minor rules; he felt no disrespect (*agāraṇa*) for the Buddha when he stepped on his cloth; he allowed women to honour the body first because he did not want them to honour it at the wrong time (*mā yimā vikāle ahesuṃ*); Māra had prevented him from perceiving the Buddha's hint; and, he thought of Mahāpajāpatī's care of the Buddha when he intervened on her behalf. Ānanda's perspective is clearly directed towards intention rather than action. His actions do not constitute offenses because he intended no harm.

²⁶Interestingly, this confession out of faith in the context of a dispute over an offense is advised by the Buddha to prevent schism (*Mahāvagga* X 1.8). By using these words, Ānanda simultaneously affirms his certainty that he is innocent and his desire to avoid schism. He concedes to the conclave to benefit the *sangha*.

In contrast, the conclave emphasizes behaviour. Regardless of his intentions, his actions were offensive.²⁷ By confessing even though he disagrees, Ānanda subordinates his perspective to that of the conclave. He acknowledges the validity and legitimacy of that perspective. He has been co-opted in the account to support and authorize a perspective contrary to the one with which he is usually associated. His loyalties have shifted from the Buddha to the convened *sangha*.

Elements of Ānanda's previous loyalties, however, continue to be evident in the account. On his way to impose the *brahmandandā* on Channa, Ānanda stops to impart the *dhamma* to women from King Udena's harem. They hear that he is nearby: "our teacher (*ācariya*) Ānanda is sitting at the base of a nearby tree" (*Cullavagga* XI 1.13).²⁸ They approach him, and, pleased with his discourse on *dhamma*, give him five hundred robes. King Udena is upset at their largesse and tests Ānanda on the thriftiness of the *sangha*. Satisfied, he provides five hundred more robes.

In this episode, we have the symbolic affirmation of the purity and status of the *sangha*, here represented by Ānanda. The gift of robes at the end of the rainy season (*kaṭhina*) represents the recognition by the laity of the special status

²⁷Note the parallels here with Sudinna's *Pārājika* offense. Despite Sudinna's lack of desire, it is the act of sexual intercourse that leads to expulsion. See the discussion above, pp. 160-161.

²⁸*ācariyo ayyo Ānando uyyānassa avidūre aññatarasmiṃ rukkhamūle nissinno.*

of the *sangha*. Because it is completely pure and fully separate, it merits donations. Ānanda has declared his loyalty to the *sangha* and has been purified of his offenses, so he is able to represent the *sangha* before the laity.

However, there is more occurring in this episode than the simple donation of cloth. The women express a special affinity to Ānanda, referring to him as their teacher (*ācariya*) and as a venerable one (*ayya*). In contrast, the king refers to Ānanda initially as "ascetic" (*samaṇa*), then with the familiar term of address, "*bho*",²⁹ and the slightly more respectful "*bhavaṃ*". Ānanda's affiliation with women continues past his attainment of *nibbāna* and the conclave's reprimands, even though two of his five offenses involve his promotion of women.

The conclave is only partially successful in converting Ānanda. It is unable to completely purify him of his association with women. In this it reveals its concomitant inability to fully purify the *sangha*. In the final episodes of the account, Ānanda represents the *sangha* which has newly confirmed itself as the embodiment of the Buddha now that the Buddha has passed into *parinibbāna*. If Ānanda is not fully pure, neither is the *sangha*. The title "*ācariya*" by which the women refer to Ānanda is usually reserved for the official

²⁹According to I.B. Horner, "*bho*" is a common term of address used between equals, or from a superior to an inferior. She translates it "good sir" (BD I, p. xxxviii).

position of instructor within the *bhikkhu-sangha*.³⁰ For them to refer to him with this title implies a breach in the separation maintained by such titles. By referring to Ānanda as *ācariya*, the women claim a special relationship with him, a relationship that the term usually confines to the *bhikkhu-sangha*.

We see, therefore, that the transference of identity from the Buddha to the *sangha* is complete but problematic. The first council account clearly presents the process of transference, modelling the conclave after the example of the Buddha, and describing its actions as parallels to his post-enlightenment activities. But the conclave cannot fully embody the purity of the Buddha. The reason for this is clear in the opening passages of the account. Fully ordained *bhikkhus* weep and wail at the passing of the Buddha and Subhadda openly rejoices. Neither of these responses expresses the *Vinaya* ideal of pure self-containment and passionless detachment.

The threat to *dhamma* and *Vinaya* forming the *raison d'être* for convening the council is within the *sangha*, not external

³⁰See C.S. Upasak, *Dictionary of Early Buddhist Monastic Terms* (Varanasi: Bharati Prakashan, 1975), pp. 26-27. For a discussion of the role of *ācariya*, see Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, pp. 128-136. *Bhikkhunīs* have a similar position, that of the *pavattinī* though the responsibilities are not as fully developed as that of the *bhikkhu's ācariya* or the *upajjhāya*. While these positions for *bhikkhus* are described in great detail with attention to the reciprocal duties of student and teacher (*Mahāvagga* I 25-37), the teacher of *bhikkhunīs* is simply referred to as a required condition for ordination (*Cullavagga* X 17.1).

to it. The speakers of *adhamma* and *avinaya* are *bhikkhus*. The *āsavas*, evident in both the display of emotion and the contempt for rules, have infiltrated the *sangha*. The decline in *brahmacariya* initiated by Sudinna's intercourse with his former wife is now well-advanced.

Damming the Dhamma: The Logic of Boundaries

The fact that decline is considered inevitable does not inhibit the authors/redactors of the *Vinaya* from attempting to postpone it. Awareness of the threat of decline pervades the symbolic universe of the *Vinaya*. This threat underlies the extreme emphasis on boundaries, for it is boundaries between the pure and the impure that impede entry to the *āsavas* which are the harbingers of decline. The concept of decline thus functions to justify and validate the rules of the *Vinaya*.³¹ In so doing, decline reveals the logic on which the *Vinaya* is based: as "*vinaya*", "that which separates", the text is intrinsically devoted to the creation and maintenance of opposition. Throughout the *Vinaya*, women comprise an important element or symbol of the world that is opposed.

³¹This point is also made by Jan Nattier. In contrasting other traditions of decline that are more open-ended than those of Theravāda Buddhist texts, Nattier concludes, "in South, Southeast, and Inner Asia (including Tibet) the threat of the decline and ultimate demise of the Dharma served largely to elicit conformity with the existing tradition and to reinforce the importance of preserving whatever elements of the Dharma still remain", *Once Upon a Future Time*, p. 138. For a similar assessment, see Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 54.

This logic is very clear when we examine the *Vinaya* as a story about the transference of the Buddha's *bodhi* to the *sangha*. In this story, frame narratives play a crucial role, for it is in the narratives, not the actual rules, that the process of transference is most evident. It is also in the narratives that we detect the development of the concept of decline. In the story, evidence of decline becomes increasingly prominent as the narratives move farther away from the Buddha's enlightenment. By the first council, which, as we have seen, metaphorically ends the story of transference, the *āsavas* have entered the *sangha*, and even a conclave of the most pure elite cannot fend them off.

The story of transference has a beginning (the Buddha's expansion of his sphere of enlightenment) and it has an ending (the Buddha's *parinibbāna* and the first council). In the middle, however, are a series of sub-stories which also have a beginning and an ending. The following table illustrates this pattern.

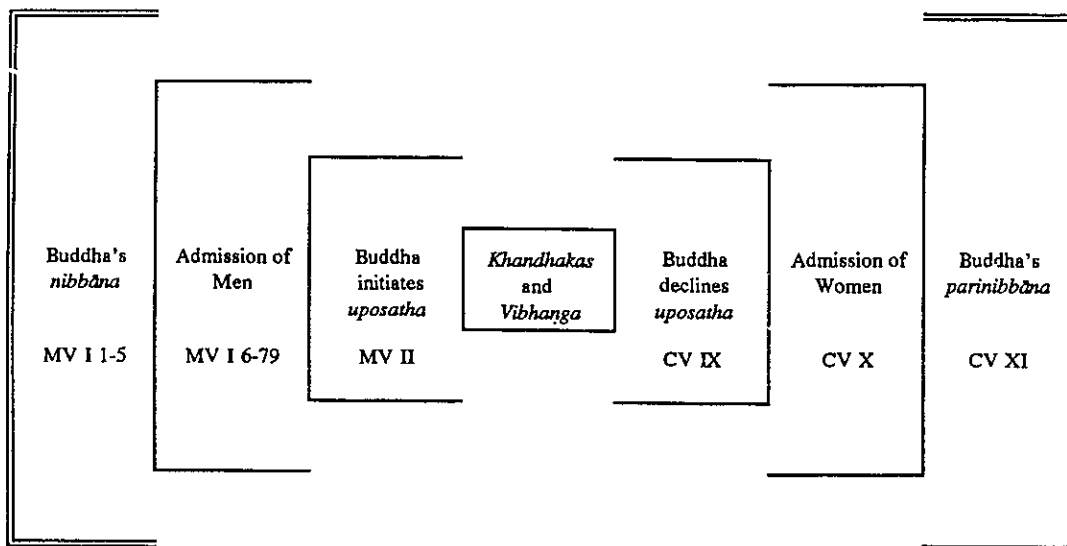
As we have seen throughout our analysis thus far, purity, separation, and hierarchy characterize the *sangha* in the opening text of each sub-story. The story of the admission of men emphasizes the suitability of the first initiates, detailing how each quickly became an *arahant*.³² Similarly,

³²See the discussion above, pp. 88-99. Each account of conversion ends with a numerical account of the number of *arahants* in the world.

the story of the Buddha's initiation of the *uposatha* rite emphasizes the wholeness of the community that is to gather fortnightly to recite the *Pātimokkha* code. The *Pātimokkha* and its analysis ("*vibhaṅga*") is thus encapsulated within the *uposatha* story.

Table 1

Stories within Stories



It is in the frame narrative to the *Pātimokkha*, the exact middle of the story, that the notion of decline is first introduced. The explicit rationale for instituting the rules of the *Pātimokkha* is the entry of *āsavas* into the *sangha*. The *Pātimokkha* will help ward them off, but, the Buddha predicts,

This inevitability unfolds in the narratives that conclude the sub-stories. Decline becomes increasingly prominent and, by the end of the main story, actually defines the condition of the *sangha*.

The story of *uposatha* ends in *Cullavagga* IX. As we have seen, the clear emphasis of the *uposatha* rite is on purity and completeness. The recitation of the *Pātimokkha* cannot occur unless the *sangha* is pure and complete. It cannot be recited in the presence of someone who is impure (i.e., who has committed an offense), before "outsiders" to the *sangha* (a group which includes *bhikkhunīs*), or by an incomplete *sangha*. The recitation must also be under the control of an elder, even if he does not himself conduct the recital (*Mahāvagga* II 16:9). The "elder of elders", we may assume, is the Buddha as he institutes and oversees the daily life of the *sangha*.

But, towards the end of the *Cullavagga*, the Buddha abdicates this role. *Cullavagga* IX presents the fascinating story of the Buddha refusing to conduct the *uposatha* because one of the *bhikkhus* present is impure (*aparissuddha*, *Cullavagga* IX 1.1). Moggallāna uses his *iddhi* powers to discern the offender. Sitting in the midst of the *bhikkhu-sangha*, is a *bhikkhu* who is "immoral, of evil character, whose behaviour is impure and suspicious, his actions concealed. He is not a true ascetic, though he pretends to be; neither does he truly live the pure life, though he pretends to. His very nature is impure; he is filled with desire and is putrid inside"

(Cullavagga IX 1.2).³³ This *bhikkhu* is clearly anathema within the worldview of the *Vinaya*. His impurity is particularly pernicious as it is concealed. He is the antithesis of the pure *bhikkhu*, yet his true character is only manifest with the application of supernatural powers by Moggallāna who is pre-eminent in the use of such powers.³⁴

In keeping with the logical necessity of separating the *sangha* from impurity, Moggallāna acts to remove the errant *bhikkhu*, first informing him that he is not allowed to sit in company with the other *bhikkhus* (*n' atthi te bhikkhūhi saddhiṃ samvāso*), then, when he refuses to leave, physically pushing him (*nikkhāmita*) from the premises, locking the gate behind him. The Buddha, however, still refuses to recite the *Pātimokkha*, in effect abdicating his role.³⁵

³³*taṃ puggalaṃ dussīlaṃ pāpadhammaṃ asucisamkassarasamācāraṃ paṭicchannakammantaṃ assamaṇaṃ samaṇapaṭiññaṃ abrahmacāriṃ brahmacāripaṭiññaṃ antopūtiṃ avassutaṃ kasambukajātaṃ.*

³⁴AN I.23.

³⁵Jotiya Dhirasekera is very suspicious of the legality and historicity of this account. First, he points out the failure of Moggallāna to lay a specific charge on the errant *bhikkhu*. The exclusion of the *bhikkhu* is possible only under the rubric of a *Pārājika* level offense, but the story provides no explanation (*Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 160). As Dhirasekera points out, the term for exclusion (*asamvāsa*) is identical with that used in the *Pārājika* offenses to describe the consequences of transgression. Here, though, exclusion results from the *bhikkhu's* character, not his actions. Furthermore, the assumption that prior to this incident the Buddha himself conducted the *uposatha* is found nowhere else in the *Vinaya* (*ibid*, p. 161). Dhirasekera concludes that the story has been fabricated to justify the exclusion of guilty *bhikkhus* from the recital (p. 163).

Before he formally abdicates, however, the Buddha provides an extended metaphor likening the *sangha* to an ocean (Cullavagga IX 1.3-4).³⁶ As the ocean floor deepens gradually, in the *sangha*, training, performance, and the path gradually lead to penetrating insight (*aññāpaṭivedha*). As the ocean never overflows its margins (*velā*), in the *sangha*, *bhikkhus* never transgress the rules of training (*sikkhapāda*) for their whole lives. As the ocean disassociates itself from impurity, pushing corpses to land, the *sangha* expels depraved *bhikkhus*, denying them communion.³⁷ As the rivers lose their distinctive character upon union in the ocean, so do members of the four castes lose their former names and clan affiliations upon admission into the *sangha*. As the ocean is unaffected by loss or gain of water, so the "nibbāna-condition" (*nibbānadhātu*) is unaffected by the attainment of *nibbāna* by numerous *bhikkhus*. As the great ocean tastes only of salt, the *dhamma* and *vinaya* tastes only of freedom (*vimuttirasa*). As the ocean contains precious jewels, the *sangha* contains the path to enlightenment. And, as the ocean is home to various great beings, the *sangha* is home to those who have attained various stages of *nibbāna*.

³⁶Actually, the Buddha does not refer specifically to the *sangha*, but to his *dhamma* and *vinaya*. As we have seen, though, the *sangha* is the corporate embodiment of the Buddha's teachings. In the first council, the convened *sangha* defines what constitutes *dhamma* and *vinaya*, thus assuming for itself their characteristics.

³⁷The adjectives used to describe the depraved *bhikkhu* are identical to those translated above.

In this metaphor, the Buddha defines the attributes and responsibilities of the *sangha*. The expansion of his *bodhi* initiated in the opening episodes of the *Mahāvagga* has reached its final point. As the ocean has limits, so does the *sangha*. Here, in the midst of his abdication of authority to the *sangha*, the Buddha metaphorically closes the circle of the boundaries of the *sangha*. The expansion is complete.

He then states categorically "now, *bhikkhus*, from this day forth, I will not perform the *uposatha*, I will not recite the *Pātimokkha*. From now on, you, *bhikkhus* must perform the *uposatha*, you must recite the *Pātimokkha*. It cannot be, *bhikkhus*, it is impossible that a *Tathāgata* [Buddha] should perform the *uposatha* or recite the *Pātimokkha* with an assembly that is not fully pure. Nor, *bhikkhus*, should the *Pātimokkha* be heard by one who has committed an offense" (*Cullavagga* IX 2).³⁸

Apparently, his attempts to control impurity throughout the *Khandhakas* and *Vibhaṅgas* have been unsuccessful. The decline of the *dhamma* implicit in the frame to the *Sutta-vibhanga* has now reached the Buddha's person and he begins his

³⁸na dān' āham bhikkhave itoparam uposatham karissāmi pātimokkham uddisissāmi, tumheva dāni bhikkhave itoparam uposatham karreyyātha pātimokkham uddiseyyātha. atthānam etaṃ bhikkhave anavakāso yam tathāgato aparissuddhāya parisāya uposatham kareyya pātimokkham uddiseyya. na ca bhikkhave sāpattikena pātimokkham sotabbam.

withdrawal.³⁹

The story of *uposatha* ends on a very different note than that with which it begins. The emphasis in both beginning and ending is consistently on purity (*parisuddha*) and the boundaries (*sīmā*) which define and protect that purity. However, while in the beginning of the story (*Mahāvagga* II) the threatening world of impurity is outside the boundaries, by the ending of the story (*Cullavagga* IX) impurity is inside the boundaries. A *bhikkhu* has successfully masked his impurities and gained access to the carefully controlled environment of the *uposatha*. He is removed from the assembly and the boundaries are sealed against him (*Moggallāna* locks the gate). But, as is the case with *Ānanda* in the first council, a residue of impurity remains and the Buddha refuses to conduct the recitation.

Significantly, the depraved *bhikkhu* is a fully ordained member of the *sangha* in good standing. He has presumably hidden his depraved character for some time. In order to attend the *uposatha* rite he must have successfully passed his period of initiation and training, and could not be under temporary suspension for an offense (*Mahāvagga* II 36.1-2). The decline of *brahmacariya* has reached the point that the protective boundaries (the rules and procedures of the *sangha*) are no longer effective in maintaining the purity of the

³⁹Further evidence for the decline of the *dhamma* is the list of situations detailed in *Cullavagga* IX which can prompt the suspension of the *Pātimokkha*.

sangha. The depraved *bhikkhu* has committed no offense (or at least none that warrants mention),⁴⁰ but is impure by nature.

The characterization of the depraved *bhikkhu* reveals problems that have developed with the system of admission and ordination (*pabbajā* and *upasampadā*) over the narrative chronology of the sub-stories. The admission of new converts constitutes the sub-story of the *Vinaya* which encapsulates the sub-story of the *uposatha*. The purity of the *uposatha* rite is made possible only if the purity of each member is ensured. The admission and ordination procedures are explicitly designed to exclude candidates deemed unsuitable. In the opening text of the admission sub-story (*Mahāvagga* I 6-79), these procedures are outlined and are presented as successful: the number of *arahants* in the world is increasing steadily, and the purity of full members of the *sangha* is guaranteed.

In the ending of this admission sub-story (*Cullavagga* X) the purity of admission and ordination is jeopardized by the presence of women in the *sangha* (see the summary of the story above, pp. 29-30). Here the Buddha makes explicit the decline of *brahmacariya* and *saddhamma*, sped up now that women have entered the *sangha*. Decline has become much more prominent

⁴⁰According to Dhirasekera, this point is not consistent in differing versions of this story. In the *Mahāsaṅghika* account, the *bhikkhu* has picked up a golden lotus petal from the floor of the *uposatha* hall and is, therefore, guilty of a *Pārājika* level offense which justifies his expulsion (*asaṃvāsa*). *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 161.

and it is combatted with more stringent rules, the *garudhamma*. Note how this confirms our analysis of the function of decline throughout the *Vinaya*. In this text, the inevitability of decline is clearly acknowledged. With the entry of women into the *sangha*, the lifetime of *saddhamma* and *brahmacariya* is halved. The response of the Buddha, however, is not to passively accept the inevitable, but to impose new, more confining rules to "dam" the flood of impurity; he constructs rules to postpone the inevitable decline.

The characterization of the Buddha also confirms our analysis of the progression of decline through the narrative chronology of the sub-stories. The Buddha plays an active role in the opening text of the admission story, seeking out new converts and ordaining them himself (*Mahāvagga* I 6-11). It is only gradually that he concedes authority to *bhikkhus* to confer ordination on new converts (*Mahāvagga* I 12), but he continues to ordain new *bhikkhus* for himself.

In the ending text of the admission story, the Buddha not only does not seek new converts, but he actually refuses to ordain Mahāpajāpatī. No longer seeking new converts, the Buddha avoids them. Moreover, when he finally agrees to Mahāpajāpatī's ordination, he confers ordination in an extremely vague way. He does not address her by her new title, "*bhikkhuni*", as he does with men he ordains, conferring ordination by saying "come, *bhikkhu*" (*ehi bhikkhu*). In fact, he does not address her at all, but informs Ānanda that her

acceptance of the eight rules constitutes her ordination (*Cullavagga* X 1.4).

This ordination is clearly anomalous and is recognized as problematic within the text. *Bhikkhunīs* question the legitimacy of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination. Again, the Buddha affirms that she was ordained the moment she accepted the eight rules (*Cullavagga* X 2.2).

The Buddha is presented here as disinterested in the administration of the *bhikkhunī-sangha* he was so reluctant to institute. He is also distanced from it. Ānanda mediates several of the interactions between Mahāpajāpatī and the Buddha (*Cullavagga* X 2.2, 3) and *bhikkhus* mediate interactions between *bhikkhunīs* and the Buddha (*Cullavagga* X 6-27). Moreover, when Mahāpajāpatī wants instruction in the *dhamma* so she can practice effectively, she has to ask the Buddha (*Cullavagga* X 5). In the opening text of the admission story, the Buddha frequently conducts discourses on the *dhamma* with no prompting at all. In fact, it is this practice that characterizes him throughout Pali literature.⁴¹

We see therefore that the Buddha's withdrawal from the affairs of the *sangha* initiated in his abdication from the *uposatha* rite is even more pronounced in the ending of the admission sub-story. As decline increases in the movement through the narratives, the Buddha's presence recedes. In the

⁴¹For a discussion of the Buddha's role as teacher, see Joy Manné, "Categories of Sutta in the Pali Nikāyas".

final sub-story, the first council account (*Cullavagga XI*), decline dominates the narrative, and the Buddha's presence is no longer a possibility.

Viewing the movement through the frames leads us to clear indications of an increasing prevalence of impurity and a concomitant decline of the *dhamma* as we gain distance from the enlightenment experience in the first frame. The anomalous placement of *Cullavagga X* at the end of the *Khandhakas* is not so anomalous when viewed from this perspective. If, as our analysis has indicated, women are considered somehow to embody the messy entanglements of *samsāric* existence and the boundaries of the *sangha* are designed to separate the pure (disentangled) from the impure, allowing women into the *sangha* will inevitably lead to the destruction of the boundaries, the defilement of the pure, and the end of the *dhamma*.

CONCLUSION

An Issue of Identity

The logic of the *Vinaya's* emphasis on boundaries is, as we have seen, predicated on the threat to the *dhamma*. *Dhamma* will decline inevitably, but it is the task of the *Vinaya* to postpone that decline for as long as possible. In the worldview of the *Vinaya*, postponement is accomplished by increasing fortification of the boundaries, the rules and protocol that protect the *sangha* and its members from defiling contact with the outside world. The *Vinaya* creates and maintains clear opposition between the purity inside the *sangha* and the impurity outside.

In this symbolic world, women, even fully ordained *bhikkhunīs*, belong outside. From the perspective of the *Vinaya*, women represent all that is to be opposed. They are not pure, for impurity resides within them; they lack physical, social, and psychological containment, for their bodies ooze and they maintain close personal ties with family;¹ and

¹Pali literature almost universally condemns women's bodies as unable to attain an ideal state of closure. In Pali views of the body, both women and men experience uncontrollable outpourings of effluvia. For discussion and citations, see Liz Wilson, "Seeing through the Gendered 'I': The Self-Scrutiny and Self-Disclosure of Nuns in Post-Aśokan Buddhist Hagiographic Literature" (*Journal of Feminist Studies in*

they can never assume a position of superiority either within the *sangha* or as representatives of the *sangha* before the laity. The ordination of women can be nothing but paradoxical in this symbolic system.

The narratives and rules of the *Vinaya* have addressed this paradox by creating internal boundaries within the *sangha* to separate the realm of *bhikkhunīs* from that of *bhikkhus*. *Bhikkhunīs* are systematically excluded from participation in *sangha* business and are subject to *Pātimokkha* rules which limit their interactions across the boundaries. While the rules of the *Pātimokkha* function to define *bhikkhus* and protect their purity, they function to confine *bhikkhunīs* and protect the *sangha* from the spread of feminine impurity. The *Vinaya* thus acknowledges *bhikkhunīs'* membership in the *sangha*, but, in so doing, creates an internal division closely resembling the external division between the *sangha* and the defiling outside world. *Bhikkhunīs* are fully ordained, but they will never be full participants. The gate to the *sangha* may have been opened to women, but they are still outside.

It is for this reason that *bhikkhunīs* are such effective symbols of the realm of the impure to which the *Vinaya* conception of identity is explicitly opposed. The *Vinaya* identity is a renunciatory identity. Opposition to the household life is inherent in the concept of renunciation. Symbols of householder life (money, kinship ties, business

concerns) are obviously antithetical to the path of a renouncer, and are used as such in the texts. But consistently in the *Vinaya*, it is women who symbolize the greatest attraction and hence the greatest danger to the renunciatory lifestyle.²

Women function to demarcate the absolute limits of the renunciant identity the *Vinaya* promotes. They symbolically mark the boundaries that define renunciation. Women represent what the ideal *bhikkhu* is not. Women's presence in the *sangha* represents a confusion of the categories, a dissonance in the neat structure of opposition which pervades the *Vinaya* discourse.

This dissonance and the creation of internal boundaries reveal the subtleties of identity which underlie the obvious opposition to householder lifestyle. In its opposition to *bhikkhunīs* the *Vinaya* articulates the fear of decline that undergirds the extreme emphasis on creating, maintaining and preserving boundaries. This fear is very clear in the overall

²See for example the story of Sudinna discussed above (pp. 156-161). Though he resists the sexual allure of his former wife, he cannot resist the appeal of his mother. Another clear example of this tendency to employ a woman as the ultimate symbol of the householder life is the case in which thirty high-born men were playing in the woods with their wives. One of the men had no wife, so a prostitute (or low-born woman, *vesī*) was brought along for him. While they were playing, she stole their possessions and ran off. The men went in search of her and encountered the Buddha. He converted them by inquiring whether it is better for them to seek the woman or their true self (*atta*). Here, the woman clearly symbolizes attachment to possessions, not sexual attraction or even social ties (*Mahāvagga* I 14).

structure of the *Vinaya* narrative. As we have seen in the last chapter, decline gains momentum as the narrative reaches its conclusion. By the time *bhikkhunīs* are formally introduced in the narrative chronology (*Cullavagga* X), the Buddha has withdrawn his presence, impurity has entered the *sangha*, and decline is well-advanced.

In the worldview of the *Vinaya*, the entry of women into the *sangha* is evidence of the increasing prevalence of decline. Women do not lose their associations with impurity when they become ordained *bhikkhunīs*. Because they are by nature impure and because they are in the *sangha*, the boundaries which protect the purity of the *sangha* are no longer effective. The decline of the *dhamma* is, from this point on, inevitable and irreversible.

It is in this context that the story of Mahāpajāpatī must be understood. The placement of the story at the end of the *Khandhakas* is not arbitrary, but is part of a consistent pattern that corresponds with the prevailing logic of the *Vinaya*. As *bhikkhunīs* are outside the boundaries of the ideal renunciant identity, so is the story detailing the origins of the *bhikkhunī-sangha* outside the boundaries of the ideal *sangha*. The boundaries had been symbolically sealed just prior to their entry.

The Mahāpajāpatī Story: An Issue of Identity

There are clear indications that the Mahāpajāpatī story

is a product of the same worldview as the rest of the *Vinaya* narratives. The boundaries that pervade the narratives of the *Vinaya* also pervade the story of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination. Likewise, the concepts and images of purity, separation, and hierarchy are prominent in the story. In this story, however, they do not function to define the ideal renunciant or the ideal *sangha*, but to articulate the danger to those ideals posed by women's presence in the *sangha*. The rules and procedures mandated by the *Vinaya* are thereby justified and substantiated.

In the story, as in the *Vinaya*, the concept of purity plays a crucial role. One of the main problems associated with women's presence in the *sangha* is the contamination they bring. The disease, contagion and devastation conveyed by the similes in the Buddha's prediction clearly relate to impurity. The *sangha* without women in it is pure, or at least capable of being pure, with periodic purification rituals obligatory to all members (the *uposatha*, *pavāraṇā* rites and *mānatta* suspension for offense). The *sangha* containing women is vulnerable, diseased, and contagious. This contagion will inevitably affect the *saddhamma*, halving its projected lifetime.

A further indication of the importance of purity in the story is the consistent depiction of Mahāpajāpatī. In all accounts I have consulted (Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, and

Tibetan),³ Mahāpajāpatī weeps outside the gate after the Buddha's denial of her initial request. Furthermore, in three of the accounts, Mahāpajāpatī is described as dirty and travel-stained.⁴ Clearly, she is not a paragon of purity in this description. She is covered in dirt, probably sweating, and has tears flowing freely down her face. Importantly, despite her evident impurity, she is dressed as a *bhikkhunī*. The contrast between her dress and her physical and emotional distress highlights the fact that she is not really ordained. Mahāpajāpatī may be dressed in the role of Buddhist ascetic, but her appearance and emotional state belie that impression.

Her tears in particular reveal the fraudulence of her renunciant garb. Tears represent the physical leaking out of emotion, a complete lack of control. They are thus a symbolic manifestation of the *āsavas*, the "outflows" which presage the decline in *brahmacariya* in the frame narrative to the *Pātimokkha*.⁵ The term "*āsavas*" (literally, "that which flows")⁶

³For a summary of the story and a discussion of, and references to, the versions I have consulted, see above, pp. 29-33.

⁴The Sanskrit Mūlasarvāstivādin account differs in that she has neither travelled nor changed appearance.

⁵See the discussion above, pp. 153-156. In the Buddha's explanation of the rationale for instituting the *sikkhāpada* and *Pātimokkha*, he explicitly states that none of the rules is necessary until *āsavas* have entered the *saṅgha*. By implication, when Sudinna impregnates his former wife, thus necessitating the first *sikkhāpada*, the *āsavas* have entered and decline is inevitable.

⁶PED, pp. 114-115.

condenses both the physical and psychological dimensions of impurity. Etymologically linked to the term "avassuta", which connotes sexual desire,⁷ it is also the term used for the intoxicating ideas that distract the mind from its concentration on *nibbāna* (sensuality [*kāma*], lust for life [*bhava*], wrong views [*diṭṭhi*], and ignorance [*avijja*]). Conquest over the *āsavas* constitutes *nibbāna*, and one who has achieved it is perfectly controlled in body, speech, and mind. This control is both the goal, and the expression, of the behaviour mandated by the *Vinaya* rules of conduct.⁸ The image of Mahāpajāpatī weeping uncontrollably outside the gate is clearly not one of a model Buddhist renunciant, but its antithesis.⁹

The argument that convinces the Buddha to admit women also carries connotations of impurity. The Buddha is indebted to Mahāpajāpatī because she nursed him, supplying him with the milk that flows from her breasts--a bodily secretion over which women have no conscious control and which symbolizes the

⁷See the discussion of the term "avassuta" above (pp. 169-170) in connection with *bhikkhunī-Pārājika* I, which I argue demonstrates how this type of impurity is thought in the *Vinaya* to be located inside women.

⁸John Holt, *Discipline*, pp. 4-5 and throughout.

⁹Mahāpajāpatī's emotional outburst resembles that of the *bhikkhus* who wept and wailed at hearing news of the Buddha's death (*Cullavagga* XI 1.1). In contrast, *arahants* are perpetually calm.

emotional and social bond between mother and child.¹⁰ The Buddha, a paradigm of purity and detachment, is here presented as still entangled in a close emotional relationship.

Yet it is her tears that attract Ānanda and her nursing that he refers to in order to convince the Buddha. Ānanda is thus closely associated with the impurity of which Mahāpajāpatī is a symbol. This association illustrates the unification of the complex dimensions of purity implicit in the story. Ānanda is not yet an arahant in this presentation,¹¹ so he has not attained psychological detachment from Mahāpajāpatī's display of emotion.¹² Also, the reprimanding of Ānanda at the first council for his various offenses indicates that he is not pure in conduct either.¹³ Finally, Ānanda's affinity towards women is viewed with suspicion in many texts. For example, in the *Vinaya*, Ānanda is rebuked by

¹⁰Note also that a *bhikkhunī* who gives birth must leave the *sangha* while nursing the child, even if she has committed no offense to become pregnant (*Cullavagga* X 25).

¹¹Pali texts are consistent in portraying Ānanda as a little slow. Despite the fact that he was the Buddha's personal attendant for twenty-five years who memorized all the Buddha's discourses, he does not attain *nibbāna* until the night before the first council meeting (*Cullavagga* XI 1.6). For a discussion, see above (p. 198), Freedman, *Ānanda in the Theravāda*, pp. 446-455, and Ellison Banks Findly, "Ānanda's Hindrance".

¹²Ānanda is also known for his own display of emotion. When he hears that the Buddha is about to die, Ānanda weeps in a doorway (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* V 13; DN II.143).

¹³That is, at least, by the standards of the first council. None of Ānanda's "offenses" is recognized as such in the *Vibhaṅgas*, but reflect one of the many paradoxical features of the first council account.

the Buddha for walking into the private apartments of Queen Mallikā and seeing her naked (*Pācittiya* 83 1.2). Though Ānanda's offense here is attributed to thoughtlessness, the implication of possible sexual misconduct is clear.

We see, therefore, that a concern for purity pervades the issue of women's ordination. Both Mahāpajāpatī and Ānanda, the main proponents of women's ordination, are associated with impurity, an impurity that pervades their bodies, speech, and mind. Ānanda's attraction to Mahāpajāpatī's tears symbolizes the impurity that is specific to psychological attachment. The Buddha's implicit acknowledgement of his debt to Mahāpajāpatī symbolizes the social bonds which he and other renunciants have renounced. The similes of contamination and the threat to the *brahmachariya* symbolize physical defilement. Most of all, however, impurity is implied in our story by the actual physical presence of women in the *sangha* which results in the premature decline of *saddhamma*. Women defile the *saddhamma* by breaching the physical, social, and psychological boundaries that keep the *sangha* separate and protect its purity.

These boundaries play a crucial role in our story. One of the most vivid images in the story is Mahāpajāpatī weeping outside the gate. Similarly, Ānanda's role as intermediary is quite striking. He crosses the space (literal and figurative) between the Buddha and Mahāpajāpatī. All accounts record physical distance between them. In the Mahāsaṃghika-Lokot-

taravādin account, Ānanda makes the journey three times, one for each request. In the Pali account, Ānanda journeys twice, first to ask the Buddha, then to convey his conditions to Mahāpajāpatī.

In our story, Mahāpajāpatī simultaneously respects and disrespects these boundaries: she stands outside the gate (*bahi dvārakoṭṭhake aṭṭhāsi*) of the *vihāra* dressed as a *bhikkhunī*. Mahāpajāpatī realizes that she cannot cross the physical boundary into the *sangha* for she is not really ordained. Yet she is virtually indistinguishable from those who are truly ordained. Like *bhikkhus*, she is bald and dressed in the yellow robes of renunciation. She respects the *sangha's* boundaries by remaining outside the physical parameters of it, yet, in assuming the garb of a renunciant, Mahāpajāpatī has breached the symbolic parameters of the *sangha*.

Mahāpajāpatī's fraudulent dress represents a very serious challenge to the integrity of the *sangha* and the validity of those who are truly ordained. In assuming the guise of a *bhikkhunī*, Mahāpajāpatī has undermined the care taken in the *Vinaya* to admit only those deemed suitable to represent the *sangha*. She has obliterated the distinction that separates the lifestyle of renunciation from that of householders.

This obliteration has serious consequences. In one of the similes, the *sangha* containing women is compared to a household full of women which is vulnerable to thieves. Women

gain admission into the *sangha* as thieves gain entrance to a house, breaking down the protective walls, opening the house to spoilage and ravagement.¹⁴ Moreover, like thieves in the household, women have no right to be in the *sangha*. Mahāpajāpatī's fraudulent attire evokes images of theft and deceit. She has stolen, not earned, the attributes of renunciation.

This comparison between the *sangha* and a household also implies the domestication of the *sangha* and the breaching of the boundaries between it and normal household life. The mere presence of women somehow makes the *sangha* like a household. How are we to understand this? A clue may be in the first *Parājika* offense wherein sexual intercourse with a woman is equated not only with *asaddhamma*, but also with "village *dhamma*" and "low *dhamma*" (*gāmadhammam vasaladhammam*). The household life is life with women. If household life is defined by the presence of women, then the renunciant life, by definition, must exclude women.

This logic can help explain Ānanda's role as intermediary. It is highly significant that the Buddha concedes to Ānanda, but not to Mahāpajāpatī. Granted that in two of the accounts (Pali and Prakrit) Ānanda provides a rationale for women's ordination, in the other two accounts (Mūlasarvāsti-

¹⁴Significantly, the *sangha* with women in it is not compared to an ordinary household, but is like a household composed mainly of women. It is thus more vulnerable than one in which men are present to defend against intruders. By implication, the vulnerability here is one of the rape and pillage that can accompany forcible entry by thieves into a house.

vādin) he simply reiterates Mahāpajāpatī's request. In these latter two, the Buddha's concession appears to be based solely on the fact that the request comes from Ānanda, a man, rather than from Mahāpajāpatī, a woman. The pattern of interaction (or lack thereof) in the rest of the Vinaya between the Buddha and the *bhikkhunīs* reflects a similar distance. Very seldom is the Buddha approached directly by *bhikkhunīs*. Rather, in almost every case, *bhikkhus* mediate.¹⁵

This pattern of non-interaction tends to confirm the necessity of physical separation between the Buddha and *bhikkhunīs*. The Buddha as the most pure of the pure must not be contaminated by excessively close contact with women. This is the implication of Ānanda's offense in allowing the Buddha's body to be defiled by women's tears referred to in the first council account (*Cullavagga* XI 1.11). Similarly, many of the most serious of the *Vinaya* rules circumscribe the level of contact permitted between *bhikkhus* and women.¹⁶ The image of Mahāpajāpatī outside the gate emphasizes the physical separation between her and the Buddha and other *bhikkhus*.

Clearly, separation is an important concept in our story.

¹⁵See the discussion and textual references above (pp. 223-225).

¹⁶See in particular *Sanghadisesas* II, III, and IV and the *Aniyata* section of the *Suttavibhanga*. The *Aniyata* ("undetermined") section is particularly interesting as it is entirely devoted to *bhikkhus* interacting with women. The level of offense is determined by the kind of interaction that has occurred. The fact of offense is determined by the word of a trustworthy female lay-follower (*saddheyyavacasā upāsikā*).

One of the problems with women entering the *sangha* is that they breach the boundary between the *sangha* and household life. In so doing, they rupture the integrity of those boundaries and introduce the possibility of contamination. We see this threat very clearly in the Buddha's metaphor of the dam that holds back the flood of contamination -- the *garudhamma*. Significantly, this "dam" is constructed out of rules specific to *bhikkhunīs* that (re-)introduce a clear hierarchy of *bhikkhus* over *bhikkhunīs*.

In my view, the necessity of hierarchy is the central issue addressed by the story. The problem implicit in the characterization of both Ānanda and Mahāpajāpatī is their anomalous expression of personal authority: by arguing against and defying the Buddha's denial, they challenge his authority. Moreover, acceptance of the eight rules is consistently presented in all accounts as the condition for women's ordination. For Mahāpajāpatī, acceptance actually constitutes her ordination. As I mentioned earlier, the irregularity of this ordination formula is recognized in the texts as a source of confusion. In the section of *Cullavagga* X immediately following the story, Mahāpajāpatī asks the Buddha about her followers. He responds to the *bhikkhus*, stating that *bhikkhunīs* are to be ordained by *bhikkhus*. The *bhikkhunīs* object that they are not really ordained since they were not ordained by *bhikkhus*. The Buddha responds (to Ānanda) by reiterating that Mahāpajāpatī's acceptance of the

rules constitutes her ordination (*Cullavagga X 2*).¹⁷

The next section of *Cullavagga X* presents Mahāpajāpatī asking Ānanda to represent her request for the overturning of the first rule, that all *bhikkhunīs* must pay homage to all *bhikkhus* regardless of relative seniority. The Buddha refuses because followers of other sects, though their *dhamma* is misproclaimed (*durakkhātadhamma*), nonetheless, do not allow the respectful greeting of nuns by monks (*Cullavagga X 3*).¹⁸

¹⁷Note how the Buddha is presented in the text as responding to men (*bhikkhus* and Ānanda), even though the questions posed to him are voiced by women (Mahāpajāpatī and *bhikkhunīs*). Moreover, while the *bhikkhunīs* query their own ordination as well as Mahāpajāpatī's, the Buddha affirms only that Mahāpajāpatī is fully ordained.

¹⁸This is probably a reference to the Jains. It could also be a reference to the Ājīvikas, who, according to A.L. Basham, also accepted women into their renunciant order. Unlike Buddhists and Jains, however, Basham claims that the Ājīvikas accorded women a status not significantly lower than men. *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas: A Vanished Indian Religion* (London: Luzak and Co. Ltd., 1951), pp. 106-107. Structural similarities between the order of Jains and that of Buddhists are clear. For example, Jain texts contain a clause that closely resembles the first *garudhamma*: "Even if a nun is ordained for a hundred years she must pay homage to a young monk, even if that monk has been ordained that very day, by going forth to meet him and by greeting him in reverence." Translated by Padmanabh Jaini, *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 20 and 168. This quote is from the *Yukti-prabodha*, a relatively late text in the continuing debate about the soteriological capabilities of women, though the text itself refers to the older *Upadesamālā* as its source. Other scholars comment on the similarities, referring to the same rule, but without referencing its textual source. Nalini Balbir, "Women in Jainism" (in *Religion and Women*, ed. by Arvind Sharma, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 121-138), p. 123, and S.B. Deo, *History of Jaina Monachism (Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute, Vol. 16, Poona, June 1954-March 1955)*, p. 500. Like the Buddhist monastic code, that of the Jains is presented as

Clearly, the Buddha was not unique either in instituting a monastic order for women or in requiring the formal subordination of that order. I find it interesting that the Buddha appeals to another sect to justify his retention of the most overt of the subordination rules. The issue at stake in the account is one of identity. The Buddha is not concerned about contact *per se* between *bhikkhunīs* and *bhikkhus*, but rather about his alliance with other ascetic groups; he is worried about the *sangha's* image.

In the story, Mahāpajāpatī functions as a leader of women who parallels the Buddha's leadership of *bhikkhus*.¹⁹ In the

applicable to both monks and nuns, but with extra restrictions for nuns. For example, nuns are not allowed to be alone at any time, or to be without a superior, to be naked, or to assume a particular ascetic posture (Balbir, p. 122, referencing the *Bṛhat-Kalpa-Sūtra* 5.15-21). These restrictions are also referred to at greater length in Deo, *History of Jaina Monachism*. According to Balbir, the commentarial literature on these prohibitions assumes that they are motivated by the desire to protect the vow of chastity.

¹⁹In his work on the *Gotamī-apadāna*, Jonathan Walters argues that the Gotamī (Mahāpajāpatī) is the female counterpart to the Gotama (Buddha). Their clan-names reflect this, as does their treatment in the text. Both appear surrounded by their disciples (female and male, respectively); both save a group of 500 (nuns and monks, respectively) by their pity; both are worshipped by deities (Buddha by gods, Mahāpajāpatī by goddesses); and each pays mutual homage to the other. Walters also highlights a conscious (he argues) parallelism in the descriptions of their respective deaths in the *Gotamī-apadāna* and the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*. Jonathan Walters, "A Voice from the Silence: the Buddha's Mother's Story" (*History of Religions* 33/4 [1994]: 358-379), pp. 374-375. On the basis of these parallels, Walters argues for the historical existence of two separate paths for women and men in early Buddhism. My work on the *Therīgāthā* and *Theragāthā* tends to confirm Walters' argument. In a detailed comparison of the texts' use of terms, phrases, contexts, and characterizations, I discovered pervasive differences between the texts' concept

Mahāsaṃghika-Lokottaravādin account of the story, her leadership and her subversiveness are emphasised. After the Buddha has rejected her initial request, she returns to her friends and proposes that they shave, don the yellow robes, and follow the Buddha. She then says "if the Buddha allows it, we will enter the religious path. If not, we will do it anyway."²⁰

The eight rules effectively terminate Mahāpajāpatī's leadership and the institutional autonomy of the *bhikkhunī-sangha*.²¹ Mahāpajāpatī may be a clear leader of the *bhik-*

of *nibbāna*: while the *Therīgāthā* emphasizes *nibbāna* as struggle, the *Theragāthā* emphasizes *nibbāna* as an end to struggle. Though the texts are clearly designed as companion volumes, modelling the quest for *nibbāna* for women and men, respectively, this quest is slightly different for women and men. *Women in the Footsteps of the Buddha: Struggle for Liberation in the Therīgāthā* (Taiwan: Jin Luen Publications, forthcoming). In a recent article, however, Liz Wilson challenges Walters' argument, contending that the parallels are only "equal" if we ignore the gender connotations in the text. Instead, Wilson argues, Mahāpajāpatī's presentation in the *Apadāna* exemplifies the subordination required of all women in ancient India whether in the Buddha *sangha* or not. "Seeing Through the Gendered 'I'," pp. 44-51.

²⁰*sace mo Bhagavān [anu]jānī(ni) śyati pravrajiśyāmo no ca anujānī(ni) śyati evam tu tāyi Bhagavato santike brahmacaryaṃ carīśyāmah. Bhikṣuni-Vinaya 1.2 (Roth, p. 6). See also Edith Nolot's translation, Regles de Discipline des Nonnes Boudhistes: Le Bhikṣunīvinaya de L'Ecole Mahāsaṃghika-Lokottaravādin (Paris: College de France, 1991), p. 3.*

²¹Walters' work on the *Therī-apadāna* ("A Voice from the Silence") and my work on the *Therīgāthā* (*Women in the Footsteps of the Buddha*) indicate that this termination may not have been effective within the *bhikkhunī-sangha*. However, as Nancy Falk has argued, the Buddha's ruling may have had long-term effects in reducing the status of the *bhikkhunī-sangha* before the eyes of the laity ("The Case of the Vanishing Nuns"). Furthermore, female renunciants today in Sri Lanka resist the re-institution of the *bhikkhunī-sangha* explicitly because the eight rules would undermine their autonomy. See the discussion and references above, Introduction.

khunī-sangha in *Cullavagga X*, but she is virtually absent from the rest of the *Vinaya*, including the *Bhikkhunī-Vibhaṅga*. Instead, the *Bhikkhunī-Vibhaṅga* presents the *bhikkhunī* Thullanandā as the leader of women. However, the ambivalence with which our story treats Mahāpajāpatī's leadership and authority remains the rule. As we have seen, the *Vinaya* consistently undermines the legitimacy and merit of any female leader: Thullanandā is portrayed as a leader of women, but she is the subject of numerous rules, instituted because of her inappropriate behaviour. Furthermore, pupils directly under her tutelage misbehave frequently and cause several other rules to be initiated.²²

The *Vinaya* consistently undermines and denigrates women's leadership. The insistence in the *garudhamma* on the subordination of *bhikkhunīs* to *bhikkhus* is maintained throughout the *Vinaya*. In defying the Buddha, Mahāpajāpatī overturns the hierarchical scheme implicit in this insistence. She poses a direct challenge to the Buddha's authority. In so doing, she breaches the boundaries of the *sangha* and, thereby, contaminates its purity.

The three concepts of purity, separation, and hierarchy are thus closely integrated and mutually supporting in our

²²In *Bhikkhunī Pārājika* II, Thullanandā conceals her sister Sundāinandā's offense in getting pregnant; in *Saṅgādisesa* II, she ordains a thieving adulteress; in *Saṅgādisesa* IV, she resists the suspension of her pupil; and in *Saṅgādisesa* IX, her pupils live inappropriately, etc. See the discussion above (pp. 181-186).

story. Purity, the state of bodily containment, emotional control, and social detachment, is the existential condition of the *sangha* which is maintained and defined by separation. Separation, marked by geographical boundaries and physical appearance, is the means by which purity is attained and protected. Hierarchy is the institutional mechanism by which separation is attained and purity preserved. It is also a characteristic of those who are pure -- the Buddha and other renunciants gain a great deal of status among the laity by maintaining their purity and their separation.

These concepts constitute what it means to be a Buddhist renunciant. By her forcible entry into the *sangha*, Mahāpajāpatī and the women she represents challenge and threaten each of the elements of this tripartite conceptual foundation. The Buddha's similes of contamination and destruction, the threat to *brahmacariya* and *saddhamma*, and Mahāpajāpatī's tears indicate that the main problem with women entering the order is the impurity they bring. The distance between Mahāpajāpatī and the Buddha, the necessity of Ānanda's intervention, and the simile of thieves explain how women's impurity ruptures the boundaries between the *sangha* and the surrounding community. And the solution to the problem, the "great dam" of the eight rules, is to erect a strict hierarchy of *bhikkhus* over *bhikkhunīs* which re-constructs the boundaries and enables the *saddhamma* to continue, even if for a shorter time. By contaminating the *sangha's* purity, breaching its boundaries,

and overturning its hierarchy, Mahāpajāpatī and other female renunciants challenge the very identity of the *sangha*.

Standing Outside the Gate

In challenging the renunciant identity, the Mahāpajāpatī story has also highlighted features of that identity which are implicit throughout the *Vinaya*. Nowhere else in the *Vinaya* is the relationship between purity, separation, and hierarchy and the threat to true *dhamma* and the renunciant lifestyle (*brahmacariya*) as explicit as it is in this story. We have seen clearly how the purity of the Buddha is transferred to the *sangha* and maintained by the rules which set up boundaries through the mechanism of hierarchy. We have also seen that the decline of *brahmacariya* is effected by the entry of the *āsavas* into the pure space of the *sangha*. But nowhere are the three concepts of purity, separation, and hierarchy as closely linked in their opposition to decline.

In this linkage, the renunciant identity is challenged, confronted, and ultimately affirmed. As such, the story is not so much about *bhikkhunīs* as it is about the challenge the presence of *bhikkhunīs* poses for the conception of the ideal *sangha*. It is a story about a crisis of identity. The resolution to the crisis, the institution of discriminatory rules and acceptance of the inevitability of decline, is a reaffirmation of the principles of the pre-crisis identity. The intent of the story is not to explain how women assume the

identity of an ideal renunciant when they become *bhikkhunīs*, but to ensure that the ideal renunciant is protected from *bhikkhunīs*. The central concern evident in the story is with the ideal *sangha* which embodies a masculine model of an enlightened being.

From this perspective, we can understand why the puzzling anomalies and incongruities we identified in Chapter I are left unexplained in the story. The story does not need to explain the devastation to *saddhamma* and *brahmacariya* as it is inherent in the entry of women into the *sangha*. As soon as women are admitted, the protecting boundaries are ruptured and the purity of the *sangha* can no longer be ensured. Women belong outside the gates. They represent the world that is opposed by all the protective rules and procedures in the *Vinaya*.

Similarly, the logic of institutional subordination as a bulwark against metaphysical decline is consistent with the logic of all the rules in the *Vinaya*. The only way the progress of decline is inhibited is by the refortification of boundaries. The rules mandating *bhikkhunī* subordination represent the creation of internal boundaries to protect against an internal threat.

The Buddha's inconsistency and the anomaly of Mahāpajāpatī's ordination are consistent with the increasing prevalence of decline in the concluding chapters of the *Cullavagga*. Just prior to the Mahāpajāpatī story, the Buddha

had abdicated his role as head of the *sangha* (*Cullavagga IX*). When he concedes to Ānanda and delegates Ānanda to "ordain" Mahāpajāpatī, the Buddha demonstrates that he has, in fact, resigned. At the point in the narrative chronology in which the Mahāpajāpatī story is placed, the Buddha has already symbolically closed the boundaries of the *sangha* and distanced himself from it.

The anomalies in the Mahāpajāpatī story reveal the logical coherence of the symbolic universe implicit in the *Vinaya*. The *Vinaya*, "that which separates", intrinsically requires opposition to justify the boundaries it creates. Without opposition, there is no need for rules, nor can the renunciant identity be defined. In the Mahāpajāpatī story, Mahāpajāpatī provides a fitting symbol against which the *Vinaya* defines the ideal renunciant. Mahāpajāpatī represents everything the *Vinaya* opposes. She is impure, lacks physical, social, and psychological containment, and she challenges the Buddha's authority.

In this presentation, Mahāpajāpatī is a symbol, not a person. Her characterization clearly confirms the necessity of *Vinaya* rules, and, thereby, affirms the logic that underlies them. As such, she and her story are an important component of the strategies the *Vinaya* employs to legitimize the authority of its particular vision of renunciant identity. Other important components are, as we have seen, the threat of decline and the necessity of opposition to the householder

lifestyle. But in the Mahāpajāpatī story, the representation of *bhikkhunīs*, decline, and the household merge together in the character of Mahāpajāpatī.

The story is thus a literary construct which functions to articulate and legitimize the authority of the *Vinaya*, its logic, its assumptions, and its vision. The usefulness of the story as a record of historical events is compromised by its constructed nature. It cannot be read as a simple description of the past.

This is not to say, however, that the story is irrelevant to the task of the historical reconstruction of the role of *bhikkhunīs* in early Buddhism. There are always reasons for the explicit expression of an ideology of dominance such as that conveyed by our story. Such expressions, as contemporary social theory demonstrates, are not formulated in isolation.²³ The ideology of dominance is articulated in response to resistance. Historical evidence and other literary sources depict a more powerful role of *bhikkhunīs* than that portrayed in the prescriptions and assumptions of the *Vinaya*. The symbolic universe of the *Vinaya* is only one vision of what it means to be Buddhist or even a Buddhist renunciant. The real paradox of the story is not the incongruities or anomalies, but its acceptance of women at all. Mahāpajāpatī and other *bhikkhunīs*

²³See, for example, the articles and particularly the introduction to *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia* (ed. by Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

may be placed outside the gates in the logic of the *Vinaya*, but the *Vinaya* cannot deny their presence.

Perhaps we can read the *Vinaya* presentation of *bhikkhunīs* as "anti-history", as a comment on what was not the historical circumstance of *bhikkhunīs* in the *sangha*. Following the theory of dominance and resistance, perhaps we can read the systematic exclusion of *bhikkhunīs* in the *Vinaya* not as indication of their historical powerlessness, but as a testimony to the power they held, as a witness to the challenge they posed to the ideology of dominance.

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