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Looking for the *Vinaya*: Monastic Discipline in the Practical Canons of the Theravāda*

Introduction

This paper introduces a new distinction between the 'formal' and the 'practical' canon, arguing that this distinction allows scholars of the Theravāda to write histories of Buddhist practice with greater precision. The merits of the distinction between the formal and the practical canon are explored through an examination of the way in which monks were taught about monastic discipline in medieval Sri Lanka. I show that until they became Theras few monks encountered the *Vinaya Piṭaka* (hereafter, *Vinaya*) in anything close to its full form. Instead, monks engaged ideas about monastic discipline through Pāli and local-language condensations of and commentaries on the *Vinaya*. Moreover, selected texts from the *Sutta Piṭaka* played a central role in drawing monks into a distinctive life of discipline. Monastic leaders in medieval Sri Lanka considered the *Anumāna*, *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* to be important resources for monastic education. Along with commentaries written in Pāli and Sinhala, these *suttas* were central monastic guidelines in the practical canons of medieval Sri Lankan Buddhist communities. Looking closely at these *suttas* and their commentaries, I explain that they were important texts for medieval Sri Lankan monks because they offered highly accessible accounts of monastic discipline. As such, they

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were particularly valuable during periods in which monastic leaders attempted to reorganize monastic institutions and establish clear guidelines for conduct within the saṃgha.

'Formal' and 'Practical' Canon

Until recently, studies of the Theravāda have emphasized the central place of Pāli, and particularly canonical Pāli texts, in discussions of Buddhist teachings and the ways in which Buddhists have encountered them. This focus on Pāli language and the Pāli Canon emerged through what Charles HALLISEY has described as “intercultural mimesis” (1995: 33). HALLISEY uses this term to refer to an elective affinity between Theravādin references to the authority of the *tipiṭaka* and the expectations of textual scholars and missionaries who encountered Theravādin cultures during the colonial period. Today, caught up in the important work of editing, translating and analyzing canonical Pāli texts and their commentaries, we have only begun to notice that the assimilation of and reflection on Buddhist ideas has in most times and places not occurred through exposure to the Pāli *tipiṭaka* in its entirety.¹ Rather, these processes have been characterized by an encounter with parts of the *tipiṭaka*, selected commentarial texts in both Pāli and local languages, and a rich array of non-*tipiṭaka* texts written in Pāli and local languages.² As HALLISEY notes in a brief but helpful discussion of Theravādin *Vinaya* literature, for instance, “the vast and intimidating literature associated with the *Vinaya*... makes relating the canonical *Vinaya* to actual practice in diverse contexts more complex than has generally been admitted by students of Buddhism” (1990, 207). In a similar vein, Steven COLLINS notes that “[t]he evidence suggests that both in so-called ‘popular’ prac-

1. Clearly, there are clearly exceptions, or near exceptions, such as the celebrated commentator Buddhaghosa, or a contemporary Thai monastic intellectual, Phra Prayudh Payutto (on whom see OLSON 1995).
2. The growing number of studies referring to manuscript evidence make a very important contribution to our recognition of this. See, for instance, SKILLING 1992 and VON HINÜBER 1996. In this regard, see also HALLISEY (1990, 1995) and note SCHOPEN’s comment on textual emphases in *Buddhist Studies*: “But notice too that this position, which gives overriding primacy to textual sources, does not even consider the possibility that the texts we are to study to arrive at a knowledge of ‘Buddhism’ may not even have been known to the vast majority of practicing Buddhists – both monks and laity” (1997, 2). HOLT (1996) argues that visual narratives were far more important than textual ones for lay Buddhists in late medieval Sri Lanka.

tice and in the monastic world, even among virtuosos, only parts of the canonical collection have ever been in wide currency, and that other texts have been known and used, sometimes much more widely” (1990: 103). COLLINS bases his statement in part on an important observation about text-based education in the Theravāda and other religious communities made by Charles KEYES, a portion of which I quote below:

The relevance of texts to religious dogma in the worldview of any people cannot be assumed simply because some set of texts has been recognized as belonging to a particular religious tradition... There is no single integrated textual tradition based on a “canon” to the exclusion of all other texts... The very size and complexity of a canon leads those who use it to give differential emphasis to its component texts. Moreover, even those for whom a defined set of scriptures exist will employ as sources of religious ideas many texts which do not belong to a canon. ... Moreover, for any particular temple monastery in Thailand or Laos, the collection of texts available to the people in the associated community are not exactly the same as those found in another temple monastery (1983: 272).

Building on KEYES’ comments and a survey of manuscript catalogues, COLLINS notes that “[i]t might well be that the content of most smaller libraries is in effect a ‘ritual canon’; that is, it contains the texts, canonical or otherwise, which are in actual use in ritual life in the area concerned” (1990: 104).³ In what follows I extend KEYES’ argument against “a single integrated textual tradition based on a ‘canon’ to the exclusion of all other texts,” with an obvious debt to the other scholars just cited, by developing a distinction between the ‘formal’ canon and the ‘practical’ canon and suggesting its uses as a tool for historians of Buddhism.⁴ I then apply it to the study of monastic disciplinary education in medieval Sri Lanka.

Rather than noting that the Theravāda has a canon – the *tipiṭaka* – and assuming that it is at once a locus of authority and a primary tool in Buddhist education, I suggest that we look for two types of canon in the Theravāda. The first is the canon as a concept, and as the ultimate locus of interpretive authority. This I call the ‘formal’ canon. This formal

3. This statement about contemporary textual use is in harmony with Peter SKILLING’s observations of Buddhist textuality in earlier periods: “A distinguishing mark of the *raḁṣā* literature is that it was actually used – that is, memorized and recited for specific purposes – by both monks and lay followers, from a very early date. This is in contrast with the bulk of the canonical literature which would only have been studied by the assiduous [sic] few, mainly monk-scholars” (1992: 113).

4. An initial attempt to elaborate this distinction appears in BLACKBURN 1996.

canon, or the “very idea of the Pāli canon,” has a history, as Steven COLLINS (1990) has engagingly shown. Since the fifth century C. E. the formal canon has sometimes served as a point of reference in Buddhist discussions of monastic history and identity. It has also played an important role in what HALLISEY calls a “metaphysics of origins” in the Theravāda (HALLISEY 1995: 43). Here HALLISEY refers to a literary practice in which Theravādin authors regularly and formally defer authority to a Pāli canon even if they do not engage specific portions of the *tipiṭaka* in any sustained manner.

The second type of canon in the Theravāda is what I call the ‘practical’ canon.⁵ This may include portions of the *tipiṭaka* and commentaries which encompassed, and perhaps “filtered”⁶ these portions of the *tipiṭaka* to students. It may also include texts understood by their authors, readers and listeners as works about the Buddhist *dhmma*, consistent with but *perhaps not explicitly related to*, sections of the Pāli *tipiṭaka* and its commentaries. The practical canon thus refers to *the units of text actually employed in the practices of collecting manuscripts, copying them, reading them, commenting on them, listening to them, and preaching sermons based upon them that are understood by their users as part of a tipīṭaka-based tradition*. Note that COLLINS also uses the term “practical canon,” in a new application of the work (COLLINS 1990) from which I quoted above. For COLLINS the term has the following more general meaning: “works in actual use at any given places and times” (1998: 78).

Distinguishing between the practical and the formal canon is useful in at least three ways. First, it allows us to orient the study of Buddhist textual practice, and the study of Buddhist communities generally, towards accounts which attend closely to historical differences and regional particularity. If we map out the practical canons used in various times and places by Buddhist communities associated with the Theravāda we will gain a much more vivid and detailed understanding of how Buddhist identity was and is shaped through educational experiences.⁷

5. A term used also in BLACKBURN 1996: 90.

6. Here I am borrowing a phrase from CABEZÓN’s (1996: 2) discussion of the relations between Tibetan and Indian commentarial materials.

7. COLLINS states that “unfortunately, we will almost never have any real knowledge of what such a practical canon might have been in specific locales before recent times” (1998: 78). I am somewhat more optimistic about the possibility of mapping the practical canon (as I use the term) across time and space. This is

Second, we will be able to relate changes in textual practice to their historical context, exploring the reasons for specific patterns of textual composition and use. Third, separating the formal and the practical canon in our analysis gives scholars of the Theravāda a new way to look for, and at, the variety of ways in which textual authority is articulated within Theravāda Buddhism. In other words, if we explore the texts actually used in a particular time and place (the practical canon) *and* the ways in which Buddhist authors and commentators link these to the formal canon, we will be able to identify a set of textual strategies through which the formal canon is made relevant to textual production. Although I do not apply the practical-formal canon distinction to non-Theravādin contexts, I hope that colleagues working in these contexts will find it suggestive.

In the remainder of this paper I use the distinction between the formal and practical canon to frame a discussion of the ways Sri Lankan monks were educated about monastic discipline in two periods: the 12th-13th centuries and the 18th century. In doing so, I indicate that while the *Vinaya* remained important as part of the formal canon it was relatively unimportant as part of the practical canon. Further, I argue that certain *suttas* became an important part of the practical canon in these historical contexts because they provided an engaging way to introduce monks to disciplined conduct.

Monastic Discipline in the Practical Canons of the Theravāda

We know that a disciplined monastic life is central to the normative vision of the Theravāda and other Buddhist traditions. Such discipline is said to help monks on the path to liberation and to offer a compassionate example to lay Buddhists. As Richard GOMBRICH puts it, “we may say that living the life of the monk just as the *Vinaya* prescribes it is very close, as close as it is possible to get, to acting out in daily life the spiri-

clearly easier when, as for the 18th and 19th centuries, we have a plentiful manuscript record to work with which can often be read in relation to regional, if not temple, use (e.g. BLACKBURN (ms.)) but it is also possible for earlier periods with attention to the intertextual references visible in Buddhist texts and inscriptions. The fragmented understanding of ‘tradition’ that is likely to emerge from such studies of intertextuality may actually bring us closer to the textual experience of many Buddhists in the pre-printing era. See DAGENAIS 1994 for interesting observations in this regard.

tual goal of attaining nibbāna” (1988: 89).⁸ But how, in fact, have monks within the Theravāda been trained to learn a life of discipline?⁹ Textbook introductions to Theravāda Buddhism typically describe the *Vinaya* as the source through which monks learn about monastic discipline.¹⁰

Yet, when we look closely at evidence for monastic education in Sri Lanka during the 12th-13th centuries and the 18th century, we find that sustained and direct access to the *Vinaya* was quite uncommon.¹¹ How, then, were monks exposed to normative ideas about monastic discipline? Monks encountered these ideas partly through condensations of and commentaries on *parts* of the *Vinaya* which were written in Pāli and Sinhala because, as HALLISEY suggests,

Theravādins found the *Vinaya* both too little and too much. They found it too little in so far as the canonical text required elucidation and clarification, and as a result, massive commentaries and glossaries were written on it...They found it too much in so far as the size of the canonical *Vinaya* made it unwieldy [sic] and they consequently wrote diverse summaries and compendiums, including Buddhadatta's *Vinaya-vinicchaya* and Sāriputta's *Muttaka-Vinaya-Vinicchaya*. Such works were written to present the *Vinaya*'s practical message in a more manageable fashion. In a similar vein, handbooks like the *Khuddasikha*, *Mulasikha*, *Heranasikha*, and indeed the *katikāvatas* themselves [on which see below] were written to provide even more practical guidance (HALLISEY 1990: 207).

Strikingly, however, we also find that most monks were expected to learn a great deal about disciplined monasticism through a set of three *suttas* which they sometimes encountered with commentary written in Pāli and/or Sinhala.

The monastic regulations which I draw upon to describe those parts of the practical canon concerned with monastic discipline are known as *katikāvatas*. These are agreements on rules of conduct for monks, set forth by the most powerful monastic leader of the time at a convocation

8. See HOLT 1995 for a thoughtful study of the relationship between monastic discipline and soteriological goals.
9. I do not, of course, argue that all monks within the Theravāda (or any other tradition) are disciplined monks. Rather, I am concerned here with the ways in which a life of discipline is and was promoted as proper practice.
10. See, for instance, GOMBRICH 1988 and ROBINSON, JOHNSON *et al* 1997.
11. I have chosen to look at the Sri Lankan case in these periods because monastic regulations from that period provide a relatively rich picture of Buddhist monastic curriculum which has not yet been explored in any detail despite the 1971 Sinhala edition and English translation of these regulations by Nandasena RATNAPALA.

of the saṃgha held for the reorganization or “cleansing” (to adopt the perspective of the *katikāvatas* themselves) of the monastic community. The reorganizations which resulted in the *katikāvatas* I will be considering here all occurred with royal support, and the *katikāvatas* often bear the names of the kings reigning at the time of the convocation. The *katikāvatas* were written during periods of monastic reorganization when some members of the monastic leadership were concerned to address internal instability and were intended to be used regularly thereafter for the guidance of the saṃgha. Therefore, these regulations provide important and detailed evidence of the ways in which educational practices developed. Precisely because these works were written to respond to practical problems within the monastic community (which appear to have included slow-witted monks as well as monastic rivals), they give a remarkably frank view of educational limitations among monks, and indicate a “base-line” for acceptable monastic education.

The twelfth-century *Mahā Parākramabāhu Katikāvata* instructs novice monks to memorize a Sinhala prose extract from the *Vinaya* which contains guidelines for novice monks¹², as well as part of the *Pāṭimokkha* and the *Dasadhamma Sutta*. Monks in the first years after upasampadā, or higher ordination, were obliged to memorize “at least the *Khuddasikkhā* and the *Pāṭimokkha* from the *Vinaya* and the *Dasadhamma Sutta* and *Anumāna Sutta* from the *Suttas*” (RATNAPALA 1971: 38-9). They were also asked to memorize the *Mūlasikkhā* and the *Sikhavaḷaṇḍa-vinisa*. The *Khuddasikkhā* and *Mūlasikkhā* are verse summaries of the *Vinaya* written in Pāli. *Sikhavaḷaṇḍa-vinisa* is Sinhala prose translation of *Mūlasikkhā* accompanied by a Sinhala commentary (GODAKUMBURA 1955: 4; 16-8).

The *Daṃbadeṇi Katikāvata* set forth in 1266-7 under the authority of King Vijayabāhu III, describes a system of monastic education in more elaborate terms. Its detailed prescription of monastic educational attainments required for each rank in the monastic hierarchy directs our attention in important ways to the process by which monks learned about monastic discipline. These educational requirements indicate that the only monks expected to have a substantial direct knowledge of the *Vinaya*, apart from the *Pāṭimokkha*, were the monks eligible for Thera status. For all junior monks, encounters with the *Vinaya* were expected

12. Called *Heranaṣikkhā*.

to proceed primarily through partial *Vinaya* commentaries and condensations using a combination of Pāli and Sinhala.

Newcomers to the saṅgha were expected to learn the Sinhala alphabet and to study a brief account of the Buddha's life. They were also supposed to study the *paritta* corpus and the *Dhammapada* (RATNAPALA 1971: 48). In order to be admitted as a novice, they had to be trained in the contents of the *katikāvatas* themselves (50). After becoming a novice, a monk was asked to memorize *Herāṇasikha* which is a Sinhala prose translation of part of the *Vinaya* containing rules for the acceptance of novices into the order (GODAKUMBURA 1955: 16-8). He was also charged to memorize training rules included in the *Pāṭimokkha* as well as meditation guidelines and accounts of virtuous conduct.¹³ At the time of upasampadā, the monk was to read the *katikāvata* itself, and be taught other sections of the *Vinaya* rules (RATNAPALA 1971: 50).¹⁴

The monk who had received upasampadā was expected to memorize *Mūlasikkhā* and the *katikāvatas*, as well as to learn the *Sikhavaḷaṇḍa-vinisa* fully by heart (50). In order to achieve the title of Niśrayamukta, or freed from the nissaya, a monk was to memorize the *Bhikkhu-* and *Bhikkhunī-* *Pāṭimokkhas* and *Khuddasikkhā*, as well as grammatical texts set by his teacher.¹⁵ He was also required to prepare for examination on portions of these works plus Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Pāṭimokkha* (51).¹⁶

A student seeking the title of Thera was required to learn additional texts. It was only at this point in a monastic career that a student was expected to become familiar with substantial portions of the *Vinaya* itself. At this stage, the monk was told to study the *Bhikku-* and *Bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga*, as well as the *Khandakavatta* and one of the four nikāyas

13. The meditation guidelines were Kāgiyāsi (mindfulness of the body as described in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*) and Satara-kamaṭṭhan (the four objects of meditation described in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*). An account of virtuous conduct is listed as the *Catupārisuddhi-sīla*.
14. The Saṅghādisesa from the *Pāṭimokkha* and the *Paṭiggahanasikhā* from the *Pācittiya*.
15. And the *Artha-Saṅgraha*, perhaps a text on the *Abhidhamma*. See RATNAPALA (1971: 203, n. 24.3).
16. RATNAPALA later notes that the *Andhakavinda*, *Mahārāhulovāda*, *Ambaṭṭha*, *Tisso anumodanā*, and *Kammākammavinicchaya* were required study for the title of Niśrayamukta, but these are not mentioned in the *katikāvata* itself (1971: 290).

from the *Sutta Piṭaka* (51-52; 204; 290). The candidate was subject to examination on portions from these texts as well as from the *Vinaya*'s *Pārājikā* and *Pācittiya* rules (51-2).

We see that junior monks were not expected to study long sections of the *Vinaya*. They were, however, required to study specific parts of the *Sutta Piṭaka* and this is important to my argument here. When we look in the practical canons of medieval Sri Lanka for texts used to inculcate monastic discipline we find that particular *suttas* are consistently mentioned. The *Mahā Parākramabāhu Katikāvata* singles out the *Dasadhamma* and *Anumāna Suttas* for monastic study. It is clear that these *suttas* are understood as parts of an education in disciplined monasticism since the *katikāvata* mentions them in the same line as it mentions the study of selected monastic rules (RATNAPALA 1971: 38-9). The *Daṁbadeṇi Katikāvata* instructs monks to contemplate the *Anumāna* and *Dasadhamma Suttas* regularly: "All [monks] – the sthāviras, the newcomers and those at the middle level – should concentrate on the *Anumāna-sutta* and the *Dasadhamma-sutta* without distraction at least once a day" (RATNAPALA 1971: 52).¹⁷ Those preparing for the novitiate were told to study the *paritta* collection (*catubhāṇavāra*) which contains the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* (48). All of these educational guidelines were carried over into the first *katikāvata* promulgated in the eighteenth century during the reign of King Kīrti Śrī Rājasimha (99, 101).

Looking at these monastic regulations teaches us two things of importance in our study of monastic discipline and the practical canons of the Sri Lankan Theravāda. First, partial, and often indirect, access to the *Vinaya* was the rule rather than the exception. Apart from the *Pāṭimokkha*, monks engaged the contents of the *Vinaya* through partial commentaries, condensations and the *katikāvatas* themselves until they reached the final levels of monastic training. Second, the *Vinaya* and its condensations and commentaries were not the only way in which monks were expected to learn about monastic discipline. Consistent references to certain *suttas*, including the *Anumāna* and *Dasadhamma Suttas* make it clear that these were understood as an important source of guidance. Below I explore the *suttas* used to teach monastic discipline which were part of the practical canon in the 12-13th centuries and the 18th century. In doing so, I suggest that these *suttas* were an important part of the

17. Unless otherwise noted, all translation are the author's own.

practical canon precisely because they provided vivid and highly accessible depictions of the monastic life.

The *katikāvatas*' indication that specific Pāli *suttas* were used to guide monastics in disciplined conduct is borne out by a series of letters written by the eighteenth-century monastic leader, Vālivīṭa Saraṇaṃkara. In letters of advice and exhortation written by Saraṇaṃkara to monks in Sri Lanka's southern region during his tenure as Saṃgharāja (leader of the monastic community), Saraṇaṃkara provides valuable evidence of the way monks were expected to learn monastic discipline.

In his letter written to Vaṭarakgodha Dhammapāla, head of the Mulgirigala lineage, in which he gives instructions for training the monks under Dhammapāla's guidance, Saraṇaṃkara indicates that certain aspects of monastic discipline are to be taught with reference to particular parts of the *Sutta Piṭaka*:

have them learn especially that the virtues of abstention from what is unskillful, contentment and non-covetousness as they are presented in the *Karaṇīyametta Sūtra*, in the *Dasadhamma Sūtra*, in the *Dharmadāyāda Sūtra*, in the *Mahāyavaṃśa Sūtra* and in the *Yogikathā* should be practiced, should be done repeatedly and should be fulfilled by those with the ideas of good people, who like discipline, who are afraid of saṃsāra, who are afraid of evil, and who have been born during a period characterized by a Buddha's birth (VĀCISSARA 1964: 215,).

This view is supported further by another letter of instruction sent by Saraṇaṃkara to his monastic followers in which he says,

... stick to the ascetic virtues such as non-covetousness and contentment expressed in sūtras like the *Dasadhamma Sūtra*, the *Karaṇīyametta Sūtra*, and the *Dharmadāyāda Sūtra* (VĀCISSARA 1964: 212, emphasis added).

Here it is important to note that when Saraṇaṃkara wants to teach his students about the "ascetic virtues" he tells them to look at specific *suttas* rather than at the *Vinaya*.

If we wish to begin understanding the practices by which monks were trained in monastic discipline, we must look carefully at these *suttas* to see the ways in which their content entered into monastic exhortation and reflection. In what follows I look closely at three of the *suttas* consistently mentioned above: the *Anumāna Sutta*, the *Dasadhamma Sutta* and the (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Sutta*. The *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* are both included within the corpus of *paritta* texts (or, *catu-bhāṇavāra*) which was referred to in the *katikāvatas* discussed above. The *katikāvatas* also make separate references to the *Anumāna* and

Dasadhamma Suttas. The (*Karaṇīya*)*metta* and *Dasadhamma Suttas* appear in the eighteenth-century monastic letters.

Three Suttas in the Practical Canon

Looking at these *suttas* as individual Pāli texts, and then as Pāli texts mediated by Pāli and Sinhala commentary, I will show why these *suttas* were selected to teach monks about disciplined conduct. We find that each of these three *suttas* provides a highly realistic depiction of monastic life which challenges the student-monk to monitor three aspects of his behavior – physical action, verbal action and mental action – and to attend closely to the demands of monastic authority.

The *Anumāna Sutta* appears in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (M.I.15), and presents instructions given by Mahā Moggallāna to a group of monks. Moggallāna describes two scenarios in which a monk is questioned by other monks about his discipline. In one case, we are told, the monk is stubborn, illspoken, impatient, and unresponsive to instruction. In the other, the monk is gentle, wellspoken, calm and responsive to instruction. The presence of certain qualities creates the first situation and their absence the second. These qualities are: being influenced by unskillful desires, being conceited and contemptuous of others, being overpowered by anger, acting with ill will about the cause of anger, clinging to the cause of anger, speaking angrily, blaming when blamed, refusing blame when blamed, returning blame when blamed, avoiding blame when blamed and creating discontent, failing to explain conduct when blamed, acting harshly and spitefully, being envious and avaricious, being crafty and deceitful, being harsh and proud, being wordly and obstinate, and finding renunciation difficult.

Moggallāna continues by saying that when one encounters someone else with the negative characteristics, one should not follow the instinctive impulse to mirror such undesirable behaviors, but should, instead, concentrate on behaving differently. Moreover, one should examine oneself with regard to these characteristics. If they exist, one should strive to eradicate these unskillful elements and, if not, one should live happily with the knowledge of their absence. The *sutta* ends with the following simile:

Just as a man or a woman or a youngster who likes pretty things reflects on his or her own image in a clean mirror or a clear bowl of water, sees a stain or blemish and tries to get rid of it, or sees no such thing and rejoices, so a reflective monk who sees that these unskillful elements are present in himself should strive

to get rid of them, and one who does not should live happily, working on the skillful elements day and night.

The *sutta* is striking for its enumeration of psychological states which impede personal liberation. The situations which Moggallāna describes also make a strong case for certain behaviors as necessary for the smooth functioning of a monastic community. In a community of monks including those at all levels of attainment, a monk is charged to heed criticism and to use the presence of unskilled companions to enhance rather than impede his own progress.

The *Dasadhamma Sutta*, found in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (A.V.48), pursues the question of reflective monastic conduct in an interactive, question-answer style. The *sutta* tells us that the Buddha preached its contents in order to instruct a company of monks in ten things “which should always be reflected upon by a monk.” These ten reflections encompass a full range of mental and physical experience.

A monk should always reflect: “I look different.” “My life is dependent on others.” “I should maintain a different deportment.” “Don’t I censure my own mental conduct?” “Don’t wise people who know me censure [faults in] ascetic practice?” “I will be separated from everything dear to me.” “I am my own karma, an heir to karma, a source of karma, bound up with karma, a receptacle for karma. I inherit the karma I do.” “How do I occupy myself, day and night?” “Do I delight in an empty place?” “Do I have extraordinary qualities? Am I distinguished by proper knowledge and vision? At death, questioned by ascetics, will I be flustered [by questions about my attainments]?”

The ten elements on which the monk is to reflect focus attention on several different but closely related aspects of monastic life: the physically distinctive appearance of a monk which identifies him as someone who has crossed a threshold from lay life, the external conduct of a monk and the monk’s internal, psychological, development. The monk is asked to monitor his own behavior and to remain aware of collective opinion: the ten elements combined present a picture of ideal personal discipline within the monastic community. The monk’s life is identified as at once markedly different from (“I look different. I should maintain a different deportment.”) and intimately bound to (“My life is dependent on others.”) a community of lay men and women.

The (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Sutta* from the *Khuddakapathā* (Khp.9) is a sermon reported to have been preached by the Buddha in order to protect monks meditating in the forest from disturbances by angry tree deities. While the second portion of the *sutta* provides a detailed account of *mettā bhavanā*, the Buddha’s protective prescription for meditating

monks, the first portion describes the characteristics which are desirable for a monk on the path to *nibbāna*.

What should be done by one skilled in his own development who understands the peaceful foundation [of *nibbāna*] is this:

He should be able, upright, very resolute, gentle, of sweet speech and without pride,

content and easy to support, with few cares and few needs, wise and with calmed faculties, not bold, not attached to families,

and without an inferior act with regard to proper conduct because of which the wise should censure him.

These lines of the *sutta* present a picture of ideal behavior in which physical, verbal and mental conduct are careful and skilled. The *sutta* refers to physical actions such as modesty and the absence of acts which deserve censure. Verbal conduct – such as sweet speech – and mental conduct – resolution, humility, calmed faculties – are also identified as integral parts of progress along the path to *nibbāna*. Many of these aspects of behavior are appropriate to anyone, whether lay or monastic, engaged in Buddhist practice. However, the *sutta* also highlights aspects of conduct specifically appropriate to the monastic life: the monk, dependent on others for daily requirements, should be content and easily supported, with few cares and modest needs. Moreover the monk should not be bold or aggressive in his dealings with others, nor attached to the families which provide him sustenance.

The aspects of conduct presented by the *Anumāna*, *Dasadhamma* and the (*Karanīya*)*metta Suttas* made them a natural point of reference in the inculcation of monastic discipline. With their narrative dialogue and vivid imagery these *suttas* provide depictions of proper monastic life which are at once striking and accessible to study and recollection.

Three Suttas Plus Pāli Commentary in the Practical Canon of the 12-13th Centuries

The *katikāvatas* do not provide definitive evidence that monastic students in the 12th and 13th centuries were expected to encounter all of these *suttas* with commentaries. A reference in the *Daṃbadeṇi Katikāvata* to the study requirements for freedom from *nissaya* (RATNAPALA 1971: 51) indicates that such students were expected to know the required texts along with their *ṭīkā* (which RATNAPALA takes to mean *aṭṭhakathā* and *ṭīkā* (1971: 203)), but this may not have been expected at earlier stages of study.

In the case of the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas*, however, we have more reason to believe that even monastic students at an early stage in their careers studied *sutta* and commentary together. This is because these *suttas* are part of the *paritta* collection which became the object of detailed commentary in the thirteenth century. The first commentary on the *paritta* collection as a unit, *Sāratthasamuccaya*, was composed¹⁸ at roughly the same time as the *Daṃbadeṇi Katikāvata*. That *katikāvata* included the first explicit *katikāvata* references to study of the *paritta* collection. This suggests that the *paritta* collection entered educational practice in a more systematic way at that time and that at least some monastic students studied the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* in tandem with their Pāli commentaries.

There is thus a strong possibility that the practical canon of the 12th-13th centuries included not only the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* but also their Pāli commentaries. The attempt to understand how monks were disciplined during this time requires, then, that we look carefully at the ways in which the presence of commentarial elaborations may have altered the ways in which monks were taught about monastic norms. Below I offer a close reading of certain commentarial passages in order to show that study of these *suttas* along with their commentaries would have transformed these *suttas* into even more detailed and evocative presentations of monastic discipline, appropriate to even a beginner or to a recalcitrant monk.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that the impact of commentarial content on the student's learning experience was likely determined in part by the way in which the commentary was made available. When, as with the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas*, a commentary was included in the same anthology as the full Pāli *sutta* itself (as in *Sāratthasamuccaya*), and a reader could move easily between the *sutta*'s narrative and commentarial elaboration, commentarial content probably had a strong impact on the student's experience. If, however, as was more likely the case with the *Anumāna Sutta*, the student worked from separate manuscripts to study the full *sutta* and its commentary, it is possible that commentarial elaborations shaped monastic ideas of discipline much less because the movement between sources and the presence of only fragmentary *sutta* quotations in the commentary would have

18. Probably by a student of the monastic leader Vanaratana Ānanda (SANNASGALA 1964: 407).

weakened the association between any section of the *sutta* and its comment.

The commentary provided for the *Anumāna Sutta* in *Papañcasūdanī* elaborates several phrases from the *sutta* in ways which provide a more vivid depiction of the monastic institutional life to which the *sutta* responds and which deepen the connections between the *sutta*'s contents and meditative practice. The comment on the phrase “*apadakkhiṇaggāhī anusāsaniṃ*,” for instance, proceeds:

someone who says, “Why do you talk to me? I know [the difference between what is] profitable and unprofitable, faulty and without fault, and proper and improper for oneself!” – this person doesn’t respond to instruction appropriately; he responds inappropriately; therefore it says “*apadakkhiṇaggāhī*” (66).

The commentary goes on to introduce a gradual perspective on what it means to destroy unskillful characteristics, indicating the relevance of the *sutta* to a monk at any stage along the path (67). Significantly, the commentary adds the following conclusion:

The Elders called this very *sutta* the bhikkhu *Pāṭimokkha*. It should be reflected upon three times a day. In the morning, one sitting down in their own residence should reflect: “I possess these defilements [or] not.” If he sees that they exist, he should try to destroy them; if he doesn’t see them he should be happy, [thinking] “I am someone who has renounced well.” Sitting down day or night after the meal this should be reflected upon. In the evening, sitting in one’s own residence, it should be reflected upon. If not three times [a day] then it should be reflected upon twice. If not twice it should definitely be reflected upon once. They say: “it should not go unreflected.” (67).

Recall that one of the Buddha’s admonitions to monks in the *Dasadhamma Sutta* asked them to reflect on the distinctiveness of their appearance. This admonition, already a spur to reflection on the significant differences between lay and monastic life, is extended by lines of Pāli commentary into an epitome of renunciation: “‘*vevaṇṇiyam*’ – that state of alteration of appearance, that state of unattractiveness, is a two-fold alteration of appearance: alteration of the appearance of the body and alteration of the appearance of the requisites” (SD: 23).¹⁹ The commentary explains that a monk has altered the appearance of his body by shaving, and that he has altered the appearance of his requisites by

19. I cite Pāli commentary for the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* as it appears in *Sārāṭhadīpanī*, the 18th century bilingual commentary on the *caubhāṇavāra* discussed on page 22 and following.

giving up the comforts of lay life.²⁰ After enumerating these changes the commentary concludes, “pride and anger are abandoned by someone who reflects in this way” (SD: 23).

By linking a change in external appearance to mental refinement through the abandonment of psychological states like pride and anger, the commentary emphasizes that the distinctiveness extends from outward appearance to internal dispositions. Adopting a new appearance is only the first step, one intended to remind the monk of *why* he has renounced, i.e. to make more efficient progress along the path.

In the same *sutta*, the Pāli commentary on the reflection, “I should maintain a different deportment,” paints another evocative picture of the physical and psychological landscape to be traversed by a monk.

It should be reflected: “‘I should maintain a different deportment;’ this is walking conduct without a playful manner (stretching the neck and puffing out the chest like a householder). Thus a different conduct should be followed by me. Living with restrained walking, pleasantly, like a cart of water on uneven ground, looking ahead only a short distance, I should go about with a calm mind and calm faculties” (SD: 25).

Here a passage from the *Dasadhamma Sutta* becomes a guide for the most basic of daily activities – walking. The monks is reminded that he is expected not to play or flaunt his figure but, instead, to engage in quiet and careful contemplation.

Descriptions of monastic practice provided by the commentary extend to the details of collective ritual and education. Extending the reflection, “How do I occupy myself day and night?,” the Pāli commentary says: “[this] means for me the performance of practice and duties, or if not doing that then discussing the words of the Buddha, or if not doing that then concentrating the mind (SD: 27).” It is important to note that the commentarial additions often engage the reader/listener directly, with phrases like “[this] means for me,” “it should be understood” or “it should be reflected.” Thus, the interactive style of the *sutta* becomes

20. “Here, alteration of the appearance of the body means shaving [one’s] hair and beard. Previously, one dressed in various fine and pleasing clothes, ate different kinds of excellent tasty food in dishes of gold and silver, lay on beds in fine bedrooms, and used ghee, butter and so on as medicine. But after the time of renunciation clothes cut from old robes should be worn, and one should eat the mixed food provided by donors in iron and clay bowls. One should lie down on grass mats using the base of trees as seats and beds, or one should lie down on mats made of skin, and take medicine like cows’ urine. Thus, it is in this way that an alteration in the appearance of the requisites should be understood” (SD: 23).

even more forceful. As the commentary prods and interrogates the student the ideal acts and attitudes of day-to-day monastic life increasingly become a part of the student's reading and listening experience.

Pāli commentarial elaborations on the (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Sutta* also transform the *sutta*'s brief comments on monastic practice into a detailed depiction of ideal monastic discipline. Recall verse one of the *sutta*: "What should be done by one skilled in his own development who understands the peaceful foundation [of *nibbāna*] is this." The Pāli commentary on this verse begins with a limited explanation of each word, and an analysis of certain grammatical relationships. Then the commentary breaks into a detailed discussion of what should be done (*karaṇīyaṃ*) and what should not be done. I quote this section of the Pāli commentary at length to show the detail with which the commentator describes desirable and undesirable action. Note that while the canonical Pāli verse speaks only of "what should be done," the commentary insistently emphasizes the negative actions which are to be avoided.

Here are the two trainings briefly: that which should be done with respect to the aim of development and that which should not be done with respect to the aim of development. That which should not be done includes failure with regard to *sīla*, failure with regard to philosophical views, failure with regard to morality and failure with regard to livelihood. By this is meant skill with respect to the aim of development. Here, someone who has gone forth in this *sāsana* and doesn't properly apply himself is called someone with broken *sīla*. He lives involved with the twenty-one-fold impropriety: [accepting] gifts of bamboo, leaves, flowers, fruits, toothpicks, mouth water, bath water, powder... [engaging in] flattery... acting as a messenger... recycling alms, [practicing] physiognomy and astrology, predicting auspicious sites, and acting in six-fold wrong conduct: having contact with courtesans, spinsters, young girls, nuns, eunuchs and taverns. And, living in contact with kings and royal ministers, with [non-Buddhist] teachers and [their] followers, having improper conduct with lay people who are without faith and happiness...who desire what's not worthwhile... or with such monks... and nuns....

But who, in this *sāsana*, renounces and applies himself abandoning impropriety, and wants to set himself up in the four pure *sīla* – using requisites with wisdom, purity of livelihood directed by energy, restraint of the faculties directed by mindfulness and restraint in the *Pāṭimokkha* directed by faith – this is someone who is skilled with respect to development... (SD: 59).

Here the commentary transforms a relatively enigmatic verse into a detailed account of proper and improper monastic life. In this section of the commentary impropriety is vividly depicted in connection with some of the most basic aspects of monastic life: accepting alms and interacting with lay people. The commentary then moves back to the positive pole,

describing the way in which a monk acts when he abandons improper conduct. The relatively straightforward list of desirable behaviors – the four pure *sīla* – merges into an evocative set of similes for a monk of pure conduct. These similes underscore the interdependent relationship between *sīla* and *paññā*, two aspects of practice which must be developed by a monk on the path to *nibbāna*.²¹

The Pāli commentary's thorough elaboration of the *sutta* continues in its treatment of verses two and three. See, for instance, the comment on the quality of being "upright" mentioned in verse two. The three aspects of conduct – physical, verbal and mental – which must be monitored by a monk seeking to refine himself are here connected to monastic practice through a discussion of three-fold "crookedness."

And for someone who is upright, not becoming self-satisfied with his own upright nature, he should be upright by acting well and by acting without laxity over and over again, as long as he lives. Or he [should be] upright by not deceiving [anyone], upright through honesty, or upright by destroying crookedness of body and speech, upright by destroying mental crookedness. Or upright by not pretending to have qualities which don't really exist, upright by not accepting gain because of such [really] nonexistent qualities... (SD: 60).

The commentary offers a realistic psychological portrayal of monastic life, stressing the challenges posed by a continued life of discipline and the temptation to seek benefits and status on account of one's superficial accomplishments.

This portion of the commentary draws attention to the individual psychological dimensions of monastic life. In contrast, the commentary on the phrase "of sweet speech" (also found in verse two of the *sutta*) highlights the collective and hierarchical practice of monasticism in ways reminiscent of the *Anumāna Sutta*. This is accomplished through an elaborate portrayal of a monk reprimanded by another member of the *saṅgha*. The commentary spells out the conduct characteristic of one with "sweet speech" with explicit references to the monastic context, focusing on the improper temptation to turn away from censure.

21. "Or, as it is said 'just as someone purifies a stained cloth with salt water, a mirror with ashes, gold with a furnace; so one spurs on *sīla* with knowledge,' one purifies *sīla* if one washes with the water of wisdom. Like a blue jay protecting [her] egg, a yak [its] tail, a woman her dear and only son, a one-eyed person that eye, thus one zealously guards one's collected *sīla*. Watching [that person] night and day one sees not even a minute fault. This is also someone skilled with respect to development" (SD: 59).

A person who responds to the admonition “this shouldn’t be done” by saying: “What have you seen? What have you heard? Who speaks of me?...” or who causes the [other person] discomfort by being silent, or who accepts the admonition but doesn’t follow it, is a long way from special attainments. But he who, when admonished, says “It is good, sir. It is well said. My fault is really difficult for [me] to see. Seeing me in a similar state again, advise me soon out of compassion. Your admonishment has been accepted.” ... is not at all far from special attainment (SD: 61-62).

Further commentary to this *sutta* offers guidance on another aspect of the monastic life, namely correct relations between monks and lay donors. The comment on the quality of being “easy to support,” from verse three, is a vivid and humorous depiction of lay-monastic dealings. Here the commentary explains, in no uncertain terms, that a monk must be modest in the demands placed on lay donors.

[This] means [one] is easily supported, it is said that [such a] one is easily cared for. A monk who fills his bowl with rice, meat, etc. while acting depressed and wearing a sad face because of what’s been given, and who blames the donors “Why has this been given as alms? Give it to the novices and the laity!” – that’s someone who’s a real burden! Seeing that, people far and wide shun [him] saying “A burdensome monk can’t be supported.” That monk who happily receives alms whether great or small, with a pleased face – that is someone who’s a slight burden. Seeing that, people are exceedingly faithful, agreeing “Our Sir is a slight burden; he is pleased with just a trifle. We will care for him indeed.” And they do so (SD: 62).

Note the way the commentator makes it clear that lay support is a resource which must not be squandered by poor conduct. Demanding too much of one’s patron is described as a certain way to lose lay support.

From this discussion of the *Anumāna*, *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*) *metta Suttas*, it should be clear that Pāli commentarial responses to these texts significantly enhanced the potential of the *suttas* to serve as guiding sources when teaching monks about monastic discipline. In their uncommented form these *suttas* already served as important loci for normative visions of the monastic life. They were enriched by Pāli commentary to serve as vivid depictions of an appropriately disciplined monasticism, and of the frailties and improprieties which so easily impede it. The practical canon of the 12-13th centuries included these texts as disciplinary works to be used in monastic education.

Three Suttas Plus Bilingual Commentary in the Practical Canon of the 18th Century

In the eighteenth century, new developments in Sri Lankan Buddhist textual practice framed these *suttas*, and many others, with a new layer of commentary, altering the contents of the practical canon. This change in commentarial practice in turn reshaped the potential impact of texts like the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* on monastic students. Eighteenth-century Sri Lanka saw a renaissance in the production of Sinhala-language commentaries – called *sūtra sannayas* – on canonical Pāli *suttas*. The first of these new commentaries to be written took up the Pāli *paritta* collection, and therefore included the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas*. This commentary was written by a monastic leader named Vāliviṭṭa Saraṇaṃkara who initiated the formation of the Siyam Nikāya, one of the monastic orders in contemporary Sri Lanka. This commentary, called *Sārārhadīpanī*, was written as a bilingual commentary. Taking canonical Pāli *suttas* as the root texts, Saraṇaṃkara drew also on previous Pāli commentarial traditions to create his work.²² In *Sārārhadīpanī*, Saraṇaṃkara reproduced the canonical Pāli texts from the *catubhānavāra*, section by section, providing a brief Sinhala gloss for each word or phrase. In addition, he added narrative detail to nearly every section of the *sutta* in question. In some cases this detail, which uses Pāli and Sinhala, was added within the briefer glossing; more often it followed the initial brief gloss for the section under comment. Such elaborations were typically presented first in Sinhala. In some cases this Sinhala comment clearly drew on previous Pāli commentarial writings, often presenting a slightly enlarged or more elaborate version of this Pāli commentary. From there, Saraṇaṃkara's commentary sometimes introduced portions of the Pāli commentary directly. When this occurred it created an element of commentarial repetition. *Sārārhadīpanī*'s readers and listeners therefore encountered *suttas* like the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* through three textual

22. It is not completely clear whether Saraṇaṃkara relied only upon the thirteenth-century *Sāratthasamuccaya* or also on portions of fifth-century Pāli commentary for the separate nikāyas. However, close similarities between *Sāratthasamuccaya* and *Sārārhadīpanī* in the contents of the sections which connect *suttas* within the *paritta* collection, as well as Saraṇaṃkara's introductory reference to a previous commentary on the *catubhānavāra*, suggest that Saraṇaṃkara drew substantially on *Sāratthasamuccaya* in his composition of *Sārārhadīpanī*.

voices: canonical *sutta*, Pāli comment, and Sinhala comment based partly on Pāli comment. The dominant commentarial voice in *Sārārthadīpanī* is clearly Saraṇaṃkara's Sinhala-language commentarial voice. It is this voice which most clearly articulates the unity of the work as an anthology, creating interpretive links between *suttas* and between the Sinhala and Pāli commentarial voices on these *suttas*.

Since Saraṇaṃkara led a reorganization of Buddhist monastic institutions and established a new curriculum in which his own works played a role (BLACKBURN 1997), it is very likely that many 18th-century monastics studied the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* with this bilingual commentarial guide. We do not yet have evidence of bilingual commentary for the *Anumāna Sutta*, though of course much Sri Lankan manuscript evidence remains unexamined. There are no references to a *sūtra sannaya* for this *sutta* in K. D. SOMADASA's catalogue for the British Library's Nevill Collection (1995), or in his catalogue of temple manuscript collections (1959/1964). The bilingual character of *Sārārthadīpanī* poses further questions as we attempt to understand the guides to monastic discipline present in the practical canon of 18th-century Sri Lanka. How might the bilingual presentation of the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* have altered the ways in which monastic readers and listeners encountered them?²³

Composition of bilingual commentary for *suttas* such as the *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* altered the ways in which these *suttas* could be used in monastic training. This occurred in two ways. First, through detailed and systematic translations of *suttas* and Pāli commentary, bilingual commentaries gave students access to the descriptions of monastic discipline found in Pāli sources. Monastic students who read the *suttas* with the help of bilingual commentary encountered models of monastic life taken from Pāli texts at the same time as they unraveled Pāli grammatical structures and enlarged their Pāli vocabulary. Second, the combination of Pāli *sutta* and Pāli commentary framed and elaborated by Sinhala commentary often created an intensely repeti-

23. K. D. SOMADASA's list of manuscripts held in Sri Lankan temple collections (1959/1964) shows that a substantial number of single *suttas*, as well as collections of *paritta* texts, circulated with Sinhala commentary. In addition selections from the *paritta* corpus are likely to have been included, possibly with some type of commentary, in many of the popular *baṇa daham pot* used to train novice monks. We do not yet have detailed studies of *baṇa daham pot* to confirm this. I do not discuss uses of Sinhala-only commentary in this study.

tive exposure to images of monastic discipline for students whose skill in Pāli and literary Sinhala was great enough to assure a fluid movement through the bilingual text.

This last point is particularly important in our attempt to understand how bilingual commentary on the (*Karaṇīya*)*metta* and *Dasadhamma Suttas* altered their didactic possibilities. We see most clearly the repetitive power of bilingual commentary in longer commentarial sections such as the one reproduced just below. This section comes from *Sārārthadīpanī*'s commentary on the first lines of the (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Sutta* (a longer section is included in the Appendix). The Sinhala commentary remains in plain text while the Pāli commentary is italicized.

In this regard, someone going forth in the *sāsana* wants to establish himself in pure *sīla*, leaving aside the twenty-one inappropriate actions, such as giving gifts which have been censured by the Buddha. [The four pure *sīla* are listed and described]... Further, a person who purifies [himself] having cleaned the stains of *sīla* with the water of wisdom is said to be someone who purifies *sīla* because of proper wisdom in this way: as one purifies gold by burning because of [bringing it] near a flame, or purifies clothes with water and ash which is said to be acidic, and who protects his own *sīla* very zealously like an insect protecting its egg, like an animal protecting its grass, like a mother protecting her only son, like someone protecting his sole eye; he reflects day and night and does not show even a small fault. This is someone who is skilled with respect to aims. Further, someone who has established *sīla* which is not scattered, who understands the means of discarding the *kleśas*, and who produces meditative attainment; that is considered someone skilled with respect to aims. Someone, having come out of that attainment and reaching arahatship after becoming concentrated by [reflecting] on the impermanence of the elements; that person is the chief of those who develop themselves. Such renunciators, because of establishing unscattered *sīla*, who have been praised because [they have] accepted the route to the destruction of the *kleśas* to that extent, they are also skilled with respect to aims. Here, in order to show what's intended, such as [that] they are clever with respect to development, with respect to increasing [their attainment] or [that] they are skilled with respect to aims,

[... a similar section of Pāli commentary is then introduced which concludes with what follows here]

But who, in this sāsana, renounces and applies himself, abandons impropriety, desiring to be established in the four pure sīla [which are listed and elaborated in the same terms as the comment above in Sinhala]... This is someone skilled with respect to aims. Or, saying, "just as someone purifies a stained cloth with salt water, a mirror with ashes, gold with a furnace, so one spurs sīla with knowledge," one purifies sīla if one washes with the water of wisdom. Like a blue jay protecting her egg, a yak its tail, a woman with a single son her dear and only son, a one-eyed person that eye; thus one zealously guards one's collected elements of sīla. Watching day and night one sees not even a minute fault. That is also someone skilled with respect to aims.

Moreover, one who grasps the way to removing the support of the defilements through the focused attention to sīla, grasps that which is a preparation for meditation, and produces meditative attainments; this is also someone skilled with respect to aims. Further, one who comes out from an attainment and again comes into contact with [other] activities and reaches arahatship; that is the pinnacle of those skilled with respect to aims. Thus, these [people] – praised because they pay attention to these restraints, focused on sīla to this extent, and able to understand to this extent the way to remove the support of the defilements – are skilled with respect to aims. They are meant as “skilled with respect to aims” in this sense (SD: 57-9).

Note that the commentary in Pāli and Sinhala is nearly identical, and that this provides double exposure to the similes. These similes emphasize that a monk’s constant attention to the purification of *sīla* through wisdom establishes him as “someone who is “skilled with respect to aims.” In addition, the bilingual commentary insists that practitioners at several levels of development can be considered “skilled with respect to aims.” The beginner who guards his *sīla* carefully is described through the similes. Someone who has achieved greater command over conduct, understands the way to eradicate the defilements and who achieves some meditative attainments is also lauded. Finally, the monk who moves from temporary meditative attainments to arahatship is described as “the chief of those who develop themselves.” Commented upon in this way the (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Sutta* provides a comprehensive and emphatic account of the goals and strategies of monastic practice, linking the distinctive *sīla* of monastic life to the cultivation of wisdom and meditation. It is important to note the power of the similes in suggesting the psychological intensity with which a monk must guard his *sīla*, a precious resource on the path to liberation.

Conclusion

I have suggested a new set of concepts for the study of Theravāda Buddhism: the ‘formal’ canon and the ‘practical’ canon. By formal canon I mean the Pāli canon as the ultimate locus of interpretive authority in the Theravāda. Practical canon refers to the collection of texts used in a particular time and place. The practical canon may include portions of the *tipiṭaka* with their commentaries as well as texts understood by their authors and audience as consistent with, but perhaps not explicitly related to, the *tipiṭaka* and its commentaries.

The essay argued that distinguishing between the formal and the practical canon will allow us to attend more closely to regional and historical

differences in studies of Theravādin communities. Providing greater precision as we explore the ways in which Buddhist identity was, and is, shaped by encounters with texts, the distinction between the practical and formal canon also provides a framework within which to seek historical reasons for the patterns of textual composition apparent in the practical canons. Finally, this distinction between two types of canon in studies of the Theravāda offers a way to look more closely at how textual authority is articulated and used by Buddhist communities whose practical canons may differ in significant ways.

The remainder of the essay applied these two views of canon to the study of monastic disciplinary education in medieval Sri Lanka. I showed that although there is no displacement of the *Vinaya* as part of the formal canon, it is clear the *Vinaya* was far less important than we have assumed in the Sri Lankan practical canons of 12-13th and 18th centuries. Until reaching the highest stage in their education monks were not expected to engage much of the *Vinaya* directly. Instead monks studied condensations and commentaries written for parts of the *Vinaya* that were often written in Sinhala rather than in Pāli. Nor were *Vinaya*-based texts the primary means through which monks were taught about disciplined conduct and the collective responsibilities of the saṃgha. Three *suttas* – the *Anumāna*, *Dasadhamma* and (*Karaṇīya*)*metta Suttas* – were used for this purpose.

I have argued that these *suttas* were used precisely because they provided vivid and engaging accounts of proper and improper conduct. Moreover, the power of these *suttas* as didactic tools was greatly enhanced by the commentaries – in Pāli and Sinhala – which often accompanied them. These commentaries include elaborate depictions of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. In such depictions similes as well as simple descriptive prose is used to show the importance of simultaneously cultivating control over mental, verbal and physical comportment. The commentaries also emphasize the responsibilities of monks within the saṃgha and, especially, the ways in which a monk should acquiesce to reprimand by others.

It is no accident that these *suttas* and their commentaries were an important part of the practical canon in Sri Lanka during the 12-13th and the 18th centuries. We know from the *katikāvatas* themselves as well as from other literary and epigraphic sources that these were periods in which the Sri Lankan monastic community was restructured under authorities who sought to regulate the standards of monastic

conduct and to establish a new power structure for the saṃgha.²⁴ In such moments of heightened attention to the distinctive qualities of monastic life and the need to instill discipline, the *suttas* examined above became important didactic tools. These texts provided depictions of desirable and undesirable conduct in which complex ideas about the relationship between mental development and outward action, as well as about a monk's responsibilities to the collective, were set out in accessible and often humorous terms.

Appendix

Example of repetitive exposure to images of monastic discipline provided by *Sārārhadīpanī*'s bilingual commentary on the (*Karaṇīya metta Sutta* (the Pāli commentary is italicized and the Sinhala commentary remains in plain text):

"Santapadaṃ," for the foundation of nirvāṇa which is called the peaceful foundation; "abhisamecca," having arrived at (by investigation); "yaṃkaraṇīyaṃ," that which should be done (by one who wants to live in this way); "atthakusalena," with cleverness regarding what should be developed (for oneself); "taṃkaraṇīyaṃ," that which should be done.

Here, where it says "that which should be done," it includes what should be done and what shouldn't be done. In brief, the three-fold training is to be done. The destruction of *sīla*, the destruction of right views, the destruction of [good] conduct and livelihood, etc. should not be done. Similarly, where it says, "by one who is skilled with respect to what should be done for the development of oneself," it means [both] a person who is not clever with respect to what is done for the development of oneself and a person who is clever with respect to self development. Here, if a person doesn't engage himself in the conduct of the *sāsana* properly, going forth in this *sāsana*, he is someone with broken *sīla* and he lives with the twenty-one inappropriate acts. [The acts are listed; see above, p.17-18, for an abridged account.]... A monk of that sort, because he is engaged in so much activity which is harmful to himself, should be understood as someone skilled in what is useless.

In this regard, someone going forth in the *sāsana* wants to establish himself in the pure *sīla*, leaving aside the twenty-one inappropriate actions, such as giving gifts, which have been censured by the Buddha. [The four pure *sīla* are listed and described.]... Further, a person who purifies [himself] having cleaned the stains of *sīla* with the water of wisdom is said to be someone who purifies *sīla* because of proper wisdom in this way: as one purifies gold by burning because of [bringing it] near a flame, or purifies clothes with water and ash which is said to be acidic, and who protects his own *sīla* very zealously like an insect protecting

24. In this regard see, for instance: BLACKBURN 1996, DEWARAJA 1988, GUNAWARDHANA 1979, RATNAPALA 1971 and SANNASGALA 1964.

its egg, like an animal protecting its grass, like a mother protecting her only son, like someone protecting his sole eye; he reflects day and night and does not show even a small fault. This is someone who is skilled with respect to aims. Further, someone who has established *sīla* which is not scattered, who understands the means of discarding the *kleśas*, and who produces a meditative attainment; that is considered someone skilled with respect to aims. Someone, having come out of that attainment and reaching arahatship after becoming concentrated by [reflecting] on the impermanence of the elements; that person is the chief of those who develop themselves. Such renunciators, because of establishing unscattered *sīla*, who have been praised because [they have] accepted the route to the destruction of the *kleśas* to that extent, they are also skilled with respect to aims. Here, in order to show what's intended, such as [that] they are clever with respect to development, with respect to increasing [their attainment] or [that] they are skilled with respect to aims,

*There, this is the word explanation for the first verse, which says "karaṇīya-matthakusalena." "Karaṇīyaṃ" means "to be done" or "worth doing." "Attho" means "attho." This is the word explanation. It is said that "attho" is said because it brings all that which is a benefit for oneself. Because it brings [that] it should be approached. It is said that "atthakusalena" means through skill with respect to aims. "Yaṃ" is an indefinite derivative. "Taṃ" is a definite one. Both "yaṃ" and "taṃ" are accusative derivative words. "Santam padaṃ" is accusative speech. There, "santam" refers to its character and "padaṃ" is because it should be attained. It is an expression for nibbāna. ["abhisamecca" is omitted in this version but followed by its gloss] means "having understood." [Word commentary on the second verse follows before the first verse is elaborated further.] ... Here are the two trainings, briefly: that which should be done with respect to aims and that which should not be done with respect to aims. That which should not be done includes failure with regard to *sīla*, failure with regard to views, failure with regard to conduct, failure with regard to livelihood. This refers to skill with respect to aims. Here, someone who, goes forth in this *sāsana* but doesn't properly apply himself is called someone with broken *sīla*. He lives depending on the twenty-one-fold impropriety, that is: [as above, p. 17-8]... This sort of company is not skilled with respect to aims.*

*But who, in this *sāsana*, renounces and applies himself, abandons impropriety, desiring to be established in the four pure *sīla* [which are listed and elaborated in the same terms as the comment above in Sinhala]... This is someone skilled with respect to aims. Or, saying, "just as someone purifies a stained cloth with salt water, a mirror with ashes, gold with a furnace, so one spurs *sīla* with knowledge," one purifies *sīla* if one washes with the water of wisdom. Like a blue jay protecting her egg, a yak its tail, a woman with a single son her dear and only son, a one-eyed person that eye; thus one zealously guards one's collected elements of *sīla*. Watching day and night one sees not even a minute fault. That is also someone skilled with respect to aims.*

*Moreover, one who grasps the way to removing the support of the defilements through the focused attention to *sīla*, grasps that which is a preparation for*

meditation, and produces meditative attainments; this is also someone skilled with respect to aims. Further, one who comes out from an attainment and again comes into contact with [other] activities and reaches arahatship; that is the pinnacle of those skilled with respect to aims. Thus, these [people] – praised because they pay attention to these restraints, focused on sila to this extent, and able to understand to this extent the way to remove the support of the defilements – are skilled with respect to aims. They are meant as “skilled with respect to aims” in this sense (SD: 57-9).

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