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Finding a space in the crowd

the notion of solitude in Pāli Buddhist literature

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Finding a Space in the Crowd: The Notion of Solitude in Pāli Buddhist Literature

Indaka Nishan Weerasekera

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts.

School of Humanities, March 2022.

Word count: 80, 843

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:



DATE: 2 March 2022

Abstract

This dissertation examines the prescriptive value of solitude as envisaged in Pāli Buddhist literature. Although there are numerous references to solitude in primary sources, scholarship lacks a detailed study of the subject, or has limited the place of solitude within historical discussions about Buddhist monasticism or environmental ethics.

Whilst we know that the Buddhist conception of solitude is not confined to a single literal dimension, the value of physical solitude tends to be downplayed in discussions about what it means to be ‘alone’. According to most current scholarship, solitude is best understood as either a visual metaphor or a specialist practice for the heroic few, whilst the ordinary Buddhist monk or nun is mostly concerned with being ‘single’ as in celibate, or undertaking levels of ‘singleness’ of mind, as in mental concentration.

This dissertation examines the various forms of canonical literature and later exegetical material written in Pāli to uncover how solitude as a value relates to the Buddhist path and goal. The study shows how both physical and psychological solitude are part of a meditative continuum that connects the act of renunciation of ‘home’ with final liberation from suffering. In doing so, this dissertation advances knowledge of Buddhist asceticism by arguing that, according to one relatively understudied perspective or ‘voice’ within the Pāli Canon, physical seclusion — often imagined in the texts as ‘forest-dwelling’ — is a value equally applicable to the ordinary monk and nun as well as more ascetic types. As such, solitude is a salient value connecting path and goal that represents a constant commitment to the practice of meditation.

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Introduction

*Monks, live with yourselves as your islands of refuge and not someone else,
with the Dhamma as your island of refuge and not something else.
Those who live with themselves as islands...
should thoroughly examine things as to their cause:
'what is the origin of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair?
How do they arise?'*¹

Loneliness and solitude

The subject of solitude in European culture has had a long history of discussion across the humanities, social sciences and psychology. Solitude is popularly understood as a sought after spiritual or creative experience that is superior to what is achieved in company. And yet, solitude also conjures up images of incarceration and is sometimes used synonymously with loneliness, as an unwanted feeling of lack or longing for company. Public awareness of solitude has been galvanised in recent years in a number of ways. An interdisciplinary research initiative in the UK has traced the cultural and social history of mainly European concepts of solitude and investigated the impact of loneliness on society and mental health.² In 2018, the UK government established a Minister for Loneliness and a commission to tackle what it identified as a 'loneliness epidemic'.³ The 2020 global pandemic has since brought to light many new contemporary experiences of loneliness and stimulated debate on moral questions concerning individual restraint and wider concern for society as a whole.

In her recent book entitled *A Biography of Loneliness*,⁴ cultural historian Fay Bound Alberti argues that it is unhelpful to pathologize loneliness as an epidemic. Alberti's main claim is that in European/North American culture, the terms loneliness and solitude originally referred simply to the physical state of being alone. Loneliness only became commonly associated with the emotion of lack and disconnect around 1800.

¹ S III 42, 8-14. Translation adapted from Bhikkhu Bodhi, Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (Oxford: PTS, 2000), p. 882-83.

² The Wellcome Trust's *Pathologies of Solitude* project (2017): <https://solitudes.qmul.ac.uk/>

³ UK Government *Loneliness Strategy* (2018):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/governments-work-on-tackling-loneliness>

⁴ Fay Bound Alberti, *A Biography of Loneliness: The History of an Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Before that, the term loneliness was used interchangeably with ‘oneliness’ that simply meant being by oneself, sometimes to be with God but, importantly, without an associated emotional lack.⁵ For Alberti, loneliness is a cluster of transient emotional states triggered at different points in life made chronic by, amongst other things, crises of identity and belonging in a modern era of consumerism.⁶ Alberti claims that the current ‘moral panic’ surrounding loneliness tends to cloud the positive experiences of being alone. She cites the romantic poets for whom loneliness was neither absence nor a ‘pathologized emotional state’ but a tranquil encounter with the divine in nature. For others, being alone was a painful but necessary adjunct to creativity.⁷ More significantly, Alberti argues that loneliness is physical as well as psychological and to see it purely in terms of the latter neglects the visceral experience of being alone and overlooks potential holistic interventions.⁸

Solitude as a religious phenomenon has had considerable scrutiny over many years, particularly in its conflict with other religious ideals. Solitude is a salient feature of Thomas Merton’s writings on Christian mysticism,⁹ whilst historical studies have reevaluated the tension between eremitical and cenobitic Christian traditions.¹⁰ On Indian religions, Patrick Olivelle has written prolifically on the history of the tension between renouncer (*saṃnyāsa*) and householder (*gārhasthya*) ideals in the Brahmanical tradition. Olivelle argues that the classical *āśrama* system, which places ideas of forest withdrawal and renunciation at the end of life, is a final compromise between the Upaniṣadic wanderer ideal and Vedic authority.¹¹ In the non-dual teaching of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, solitude is expressed in the communion or oneness between *ātman* and

⁵ Alberti, *A Biography of Loneliness*, p. 18. Alberti cites several reasons for the shift in conceptions including how secularisation of society contributed to a growing disconnect with God as a constant presence, p. 227.

⁶ Alberti, *A Biography of Loneliness*, p. 38.

⁷ Alberti describes Virginia Woolf’s novel *The Lighthouse* as an exploration of time and loneliness. *A Biography of Loneliness*, p. 215.

⁸ Alberti, *Biography of Loneliness*, p. 235.

⁹ See John F. Teahan, Solitude: A Central Motif in Thomas Merton’s Life and Writings, *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 50 no. 4 (1982), pp. 521-38.

¹⁰ David Vincent, *A History of Solitude* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020).

¹¹ Patrick Olivelle, ‘The Renouncer Tradition’ in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. by Gavin Flood (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 271-87. The *āśrama* ‘stages’ of religious life for a male Brahmin are studentship (*brahmacarya*), married household life, (*gārhasthya*), forest withdrawal (*vānaprastha*) and wandering (*parivrājya*).

brāhman.¹² In the dualistic teaching of Sāṅkhya, renunciation is disassociation of the senses from their objects (*pratyāhāra*). Solitude is both aloneness (*kaivalya*) and separation (*viveka*) of *puruṣa* (subject) from *prakṛti* (object). According to Yohanan Grinshpon, the quest for solitude in Patañjali's Sāṅkhya philosophy of the *Yoga Sūtras* is a quest for death embodied, or rather, disembodied, in the moribund state of the *yogin* in his/her path to 'ultimate dissociation'.¹³ According to the devotional theology of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, abandoning attachment to the fruit (*phala*) of action (*karma*) internalises the act of renunciation. Thus, devotion to God does not necessarily require retreating to the forest.¹⁴ In contrast to these Hindu traditions, the Sikh religion rejects the idea of renunciation — together with the notion of physical solitude — as this verse from the *Guru Granth Sahib* neatly sums up:

Why do you go to the forest in search of God?
 He lives in all and is yet ever distinct;
 He abides with you, too,
 as a fragrance dwells in a flower,
 and reflection in a mirror;
 so does God dwell inside everything;
 seek Him, therefore, in your heart.¹⁵

Despite its enduring appeal in the study of humanities, solitude as a concept has lacked comprehensive scrutiny in Buddhist studies.¹⁶ The Pāli Canon of the Theravāda, or more accurately the Theriya tradition,¹⁷ presents a particular form of renunciate life in

¹² *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI 9-10. Valerie Roebuck, *The Upaniṣads* (London: Penguin, 2003).

¹³ Yohanan Grinshpon, *Silence Unheard: Deathly Otherness in Pātañjala-yoga* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 56.

¹⁴ Patrick Olivelle, *Ascetics and Brahmins. Studies in Ideologies and Institutions* (London: Anthem, 2011), pp. 58-59.

¹⁵ *Guru Granth Sahib, Adi Granth, Dhanasari*, Andrew Wilson, *World Scripture — A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts* (New York, Paragon, 1991), p. 73.

¹⁶ In a recent book, Buddhist teacher, writer and scholar, Stephen Batchelor presents an original and personal study of solitude. Batchelor refers briefly to some key concepts from the Pāli Canon such as *jhāna*, *samādhi* and *viveka* from an interesting phenomenological perspective. *The Art of Solitude* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2020).

¹⁷ As Rupert Gethin has shown, the term *theravāda* is very rare in the Pāli Canon (M I 164) and, based on textual sources, it is unlikely that it refers to a school. *Thera-vāda* as 'school' is better simply expressed as Thera or Theriya. See 'Was Buddhaghosa a Theravādin? Buddhist Identity in the Pali Commentaries and Chronicles' in *How Theravāda is Theravāda: Exploring Buddhist identities*, ed. by Peter Skilling, Jason A. Carbine, Claudio Cicuzza & Santi Pakdeekham (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 2012), pp. 1-63, (p. 14). See also below on the discussion about the commentaries.

which a monk (*bhikkhu*) or nun (*bhikkhunī*) finds true happiness outside of conventional society and undertakes the regular practice of meditation. I suggest that Buddhist thought is enriched by notions of solitude that have hitherto not been studied to the depth that it deserves.

In the context of the Pāli Canon, I use the term solitude to refer to a range of meanings and concepts. Solitude, as what is appropriate to the Buddhist path, can be described in terms of a continuum linking the practical with the psychological. The purposeful practice of physical solitude (or physical seclusion), often expressed in the texts in terms of forest practice — applying oneself to meditation, alone, secluded from people — is invariably linked with mental seclusion; the mind in various states of spiritual felicity, ‘separated’ from mental defilements. There are also relational/attitudinal concepts such as independence, self-reliance and even fearlessness that can also be considered within the umbrella term solitude. Whilst these categories, as well as renunciation generally, are not necessarily about literally living ‘alone’, we find that they are often bound up with the imagery of physical solitude and various levels of mental attainment through meditative effort. Similarly, whilst the forest is not incompatible with community, it can nevertheless be perceived as a *locus amoenus* foreshadowing the inner delight of private meditation. In this skilful sense of purposeful and fulfilling practices and attainments, solitude embraces concepts that are precisely opposite to what we understand as loneliness.

Loneliness, in its popular connection as a negative emotion, has no direct translation in Sanskrit/Pāli but is part of a wider problem that is the universal truth of *dukkha* (suffering).¹⁸ The basic tenet of Buddhist thought is the Four Noble Truths: the reality of suffering, its origin, the path leading to its cessation and its cessation (*nibbāna*). The beginning of the path to *nibbāna* is typically expressed in the texts as a disquiet in domestic life,¹⁹ betraying a form of loneliness within household life. Yet here, the experience of loneliness is based on a lack of understanding of self and other and accompanied by an aspiration to find lasting happiness. What is conventionally understood as loneliness finds expression in the Pāli Canon as either desire or fear especially in monks who struggle with meditation.²⁰ Fear (as aversion) and desire are

¹⁸ There are three kinds of *dukkha*: 1. the *dukkha* of pain, 2. the *dukkha* of conditioned things and 3. the *dukkha* of change. S IV 259, 10-14.

¹⁹ E.g. D I 62-63. See next chapter.

²⁰ For example, at A III 95-99 and A III 100-03.

essentially forms of craving (*taṇhā*)²¹ — the origin of *dukkha*. Other forms of loneliness are expressed in the discontent (*anabhirati*) of a monk who is unable to live alone.²² Elsewhere, distress (*vighātava*) and longing (*apekhava*) are said to arise through a lack of insight into the impermanent nature of self.²³ Loneliness of the infirm is betrayed by the laments of the monk Vakkali whose illness prevents him from seeing the Buddha. The Buddha reassures him with the famous maxim: ‘one who sees *Dhamma*, sees me; one who sees me sees *Dhamma*’²⁴, so that even if Vakkali is alone he will not be lonely.

Solitude in a Buddhist context therefore binds together lack and fulfilment through knowledge. A concern to better understand solitude reflects the very concerns of Buddhism generally: *dukkha* and its cessation.

The paradox of solitude and community

The regular and frequent practice of solitary meditation is a salient feature in the Buddhist path that is referenced through repeated formulae, imagery and narrative. More symbolically, solitude takes expression in conceptions of the path as ‘lonely’ or ‘narrow’ (*ekāyana magga*) which, as I will later explore, fits with the notion of a monk or nun’s solitude²⁵ in relation to their religious task.²⁶ A monk or nun’s²⁷ work is not considered a partnership with others and *Dhamma* is to be known ‘individually by the wise’.²⁸ He or

²¹ Craving has three forms: 1. craving for sense pleasures, 2. craving for existence and 3. craving for non-existence, S V 421, 25-28.

²² A V 122, 3.

²³ S III 15-18.

²⁴ *Vakkali dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati // yo maṃ passati so dhamma passati //* S III 121, 27-28.

²⁵ Although gender does matter in relation to the ordinary experience of forest or solitary practice, gender identity as ‘man’ or ‘woman’ or ‘anything else’ for that matter falls away for one with a concentrated mind and who sees *Dhamma*, S I 129, 24-27.

²⁶ CPD s.v. *ekāyana*. For a discussion of the path as ‘narrow’ or ‘lonely’ see Rupert Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening: A Study of the Bodhi-Pakkhiyā Dhammā* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), p.63.

²⁷ Most of my (and others’) translations that involve the personal pronoun *taṃ* are translated as ‘he’ rather than ‘he/she’. I have translated *taṃ* as ‘he’ only for poetic effect. I have tried to avoid sexist language as much as possible and only refer to male monastics for expediency (see note in section 1.1). Otherwise, I use ‘he/she’, ‘him/her’ in sentences that contain my own analysis.

²⁸ of D II 93, 34; *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhī ti*.

she alone is responsible for his/her liberation from suffering.²⁹ He or she goes alone to *nibbāna* along a single path in a process of cultivation of wholesome states of mind and abandoning the unwholesome.

Just as the path is ‘lonely’, *nibbāna* is also conceived as non-social. Steven Collins argued throughout his magnificent *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities* that whilst doctrinal descriptions of *nibbāna* are generally silent about its nature, Buddhist storytelling tends to narrate *nibbāna* in terms of closure.³⁰ Collins showed that the difference between the Buddhist and Judaeo-Christian narration of time is based on their respective ‘individualistic’ and ‘collectivist’ conceptions of ‘salvation’.³¹ Whilst Buddhist liberation is ‘privatized’, just as in other renunciate Indian conceptions of *mokṣa*, salvation in Judaeo-Christian traditions is communal.³²

Yet alongside the poems of the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* which speak of hermit-like monks and nuns who inhabit the landscape and practice separate from others are texts that praise fraternity, a monk’s obligations to others and learning from a spiritual teacher (*kalyāṇamitta*). Praise for both communal spiritual life and the individual work of meditation is neatly summed up as conditions that will secure the longevity of the religious Order (*Saṅgha*) after the Buddha’s *parinibbāna*; namely the ‘harmonious assembly of monastics’ and ‘devotion to forest lodgings’.³³

Perhaps the most famous contrast between the two ideals of solitude and community is the story of the Buddha’s hesitation to teach. After the Buddha became enlightened sitting alone in the seclusion of an *assattha* tree at Uruvelā, he reflected on the *Dhamma* he had discovered. Since this *Dhamma* is deep and difficult, he thought, it would be difficult for those enmeshed in worldly life to comprehend it. So, his mind inclined to ‘living at ease’ instead of teaching in society. Only through the pleas of Brahmā, (the great creator god of Brahmanism but according to Buddhism one of many

²⁹ As reflected in the monk Vaṅgisa’s realisation that only he can remove his discontent and arouse happiness, S I 186, 17-120.

³⁰ Steven Collins wrote that the ineffability of *nibbāna* is expressed by the term *atakkāvacara*. *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pāli Imaginaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 97.

³¹ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 250.

³² The idea of Christian ‘collective’ salvation is also strikingly imagined in the Christian gospel song ‘Go with me to that Land’.

³³ D II 76-77.

higher deities that inhabit the cosmos and who are not immortal)³⁴ did the Buddha reconsider. Surveying the world with his Buddha-eye, he realised that there were beings who could truly understand his *Dhamma*. So, the Buddha changed his mind and out of compassion he decided to ‘open the doors of the deathless’ and start teaching in the world.³⁵

For some, the story need not be taken at face value as a historical event or even represent an inner tension for the Buddha. Rather, it is a mythical representation of how even those at the highest echelons of Brahmanism inevitably follow the Buddha.³⁶ In his in-depth study of the relationship between Buddhist monasticism and spiritual progress, Mohan Wijayaratna argues that after his enlightenment, the Buddha’s natural inclination was to organise a community.³⁷ However, such conceptions overlook the rich imagery of the Buddha’s post-realisation practice of seclusion. According to hagiography, the Buddha remained seated alone for seven days in the seclusion of the *assattha* tree after he gained enlightenment.³⁸ Later, when meditating alone at the foot of a tree elsewhere, the Buddha tells a Brahmin there is ‘nothing more he needs to do’.³⁹ The Buddha is said to be ‘hard to approach’ (*durāsadā*) like a lion, but if approached, it is to be done quietly.⁴⁰ Hence, we are presented with images of private peace, seclusion and silence that speak of the personal nature of *nibbāna*.

The tension in the story of the Buddha’s hesitation partly corresponds to a dichotomy that Alex Wayman called ‘truth’ and ‘silence’.⁴¹ Wayman suggested that the

³⁴ See Maurice O’C Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha. A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (London: Wisdom, 1996), p. 43 and Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 113-14.

³⁵ The Pāli sources of this story can be found in the *Mahāpadana-sutta* (D II 35-39), the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* (M I 167-169), the *Brahmasaṃyutta-sutta* (S I 136-8) and the *Uruvelā-sutta* (A II 20-21).

³⁶ See Dhivan Thomas Jones, ‘Why Did Brahmā Ask the Buddha to Teach?’, *Buddhist Studies Review*, 26 no. 1 (2009), 85-102. Jones argues that the story symbolises the reality of ‘decision making’ in the Buddha’s teaching career (p. 99).

³⁷ Wijayaratna, Mohan, *Buddhist Monastic Life According to the Texts of the Theravāda Tradition*, translated by Claude Grangier and Steven Collins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 111.

³⁸ Ud 32, 22-23.

³⁹ S I 180-81. Although the Buddha clearly means that he has fully rested from spiritual work, (*yogakkhemma*), the imagery speaks of his devotion to seclusion.

⁴⁰ Sn 107, 4.

⁴¹ Alex Wayman, ‘Two Traditions of India - Truth and Silence’, *Philosophy East and West*, 24 (1974), 389-403.

Buddha belonged to the ‘silence’ or *muni* tradition, but later became part of the ‘truth’ tradition when he commenced teaching. Wayman identified some overlap between the two. For example, he identified the Buddha’s refusal to answer certain questions (or to answer them in a certain way) as ‘selective silence’.⁴² Elsewhere, the texts also speak of the Buddha coming out of his seclusion to teach lest his disciples wander astray from their instruction.⁴³ However, Wayman did not elaborate how the Buddha’s seclusion is not only used to describe his own solitude as a pleasant dwelling (*diṭṭhadhammasukhavihāra*)⁴⁴ for himself but also as a teaching for others as an act of concern (*anukampā*) for ‘future generations’.⁴⁵ The commentaries elaborate that through the latter, the Buddha motivates his followers to seek out their own seclusion.⁴⁶

In this dissertation, I will discuss how the Pāli Canon uses images of the Buddha’s solitude to set an example for others. In doing so, the ordinary monk is faced with following two kinds of life. ‘Living at ease, inner silence and stillness’ are cultivated and matured through periods of quiet meditation away from others. These qualities strengthen states of calm and support the cultivation of wisdom, or insight into *Dhamma*. Wisdom is also developed through communal practices such as reciting and discussing *Dhamma*. Thus, the typical disciple (*sāvaka*) of the Buddha in the Pāli Canon inhabits and finds spiritual fulfilment both alone and in his community.

Sometimes the paradox is expressed in terms of the value that practicing monks/nuns have in the community. Monks/nuns are recommended to associate with those who are paradigms of ascetic effort.⁴⁷ Their inclination for seclusion (*paṭisallāna*) is one of ten qualities that lead to ‘warmth, respect, esteem, equality and unity’.⁴⁸ A monk or nun shows humility and compassion by not only reflecting on his own success or failures but also those of his colleagues.⁴⁹ They can find companionship with

⁴² Wayman, *Truth and Silence*, p. 392.

⁴³ S I 91-94.

⁴⁴ *diṭṭhadhammasukhavihāra* refers to the non-worldly joy experienced in each of the four *jhānas* or meditative absorptions, A II 45, 5-6.

⁴⁵ E.g. at M I 23, 32-36 and A I 60-61.

⁴⁶ The commentary to the *Bhayabherava Sutta* (M I 16-24) at Ps I 129, 4-12, see Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses – A translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Bristol: Pāli Text Society, 2012), p. 1625 n. 248.

⁴⁷ A I 286, 1-5. He should associate with a monk who 1. gives what is difficult to give, 2. does what is difficult to do and 3. endures what is difficult to endure.

⁴⁸ *piyattāya garuttāya bhāvanāya sāmāññāya ekībhāvāya*. A V 168, 14-17.

⁴⁹ A IV 160, 8-13.

meditators⁵⁰ whose own success is usually associated with forest-dwelling. Spiritual work is possible in mixed settings. Moreover, community practice not only brings monastics together, but also closer to the affairs of society at large.

As I will discuss presently, practice and study as two ‘vocations’ overlap with forest (*arañña*) and town (*gāma*) or two ‘residences’ as valid arenas of religious life. The idea of a conflict between these vocations and the historical development of monasticism in relation to them have been the subject of considerable debate over many years. In this dissertation, I will only cover some of this discussion in relation to how the subject of solitude has been treated in the past. My aim is to uncover the prescriptive values of solitude envisaged by Pāli literature. I am not concerned with questions regarding the history of Buddhist monasticism or how monks and nuns actually lived.

Forest withdrawal in historical debate

In the past, the question of solitude in Indian Buddhism has had considerable discussion but as part of studies into asceticism as a historical phenomenon. A recurring theme is that of a dichotomy between ideals of wandering and settled religious life in the monastery — whether between meditating and scholar monks or between forest and town monks. Much of this debate has been influenced by the theories of the early nineteenth century sociologist Max Weber. Weber discussed the original Buddhist monk as part of the wider Indian renouncer movement and, as such, he conceived as ‘other-worldly’ (*außerweltlich*) or ‘world-fleeing’ (*weltfluchtig*).⁵¹ Weber argued that the religious power or ‘charisma’ of the realised individual became ‘routinized’ through rules, organisation and structure in order to preserve a stable and successful community and identity after the Buddha’s *parinibbāna*.⁵² For Weber, the monk as ‘world renouncer’ of a period prior to monastic institutionalisation is the most authentic.

⁵⁰ S I 158, 28-30:

Keep company with the wise,
With resolute meditators,
With the noble ones who dwell secluded,
Their energy constantly aroused.

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p. 640.

⁵¹ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 323.

⁵² See Reginald Ray, *Buddhist Saints in India. A study in Buddhist Values and Orientations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 23-24.

Other scholars, whether directly or indirectly influenced by Weber, have also speculated about a historical shift from asceticism to cenobitism as essentially correct. Sukumar Dutt claimed that monastic rules (*vinaya*) about lodgings, which were originally temporarily allocated during the three month rainy retreat, were the fillip to more lasting settlements defined by organisational structures, study and memorisation of *suttas*.⁵³ Greg Bailey and Ian Mabbett give an informative summary of solitude as a central motif with the peripatetic impulse clear and unambiguous in the Pāli Canon.⁵⁴ Whilst they contend that wandering and the settled life are not mutually exclusive but can apply equally to the individual *bhikkhu*,⁵⁵ they also speak of a ‘historical change in status’ from forest to monastery dwelling.⁵⁶ Gregory Schopen argues that ascetic practices were emasculated by *vinaya* texts which, he argues, are a product of the middle period of Indian Buddhism (between the beginning of the Common Era and 500 CE).⁵⁷ According to Schopen, permanent monastic settlements of the kind depicted in the *vinaya* did not appear before the time of Aśoka.⁵⁸ Schopen has argued consistently that inscriptions provide earlier evidence of Buddhist monasticism. Schopen’s arguments and chronology are controversial since others have shown that the Pāli *vinaya* is a much older text.⁵⁹

Reginald Ray, relying heavily on Weber’s theories, argued that the original tradition of ‘forest saints’ became transformed and obscured by institutionalised

⁵³ Sukumar Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1960), p. 103.

⁵⁴ Greg Bailey and Ian Mabbett, *The Sociology of Early Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 165-68.

⁵⁵ ‘It must at least be clear, though, that the wandering holy man and the domesticated monk do not belong to two different institutions, stages of history, or cultural worlds. They interpenetrate; they can be one and the same man, seen from different points of view.’ Bailey & Mabbett, *Sociology of Early Buddhism*, p. 179.

⁵⁶ Bailey and Mabbett, *The Sociology of Early Buddhism*, p. 235.

⁵⁷ Gregory Schopen, ‘Deaths, Funerals, and the Division of Property in a Monastic Code’, in *Buddhism in Practice* (Abridged Edition), ed. by D. S. Lopez (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 357-386, (p. 358 and p.360).

⁵⁸ Gregory Schopen, ‘A Well-Sanitized Shroud: Asceticism and Institutional Values in the Middle Period of Buddhist Monasticism’, in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. by Patrick Olivelle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 317-47, (p. 317).

⁵⁹ The *vinayas* of the different Buddhist schools were originally transmitted orally. The Pāli *vinaya* is thought to be committed to writing in the first century BCE and is considered to predate the other *vinayas* by some centuries. See Petra Kieffer-Pulz, ‘What the Vinayas Can Tell Us about Law’ in *Buddhism and Law: An Introduction*, ed. by Rebecca Redwood French, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 46-62 (p. 51).

monasticism bent upon learning and preaching. This modified community of settled monastics were more reliant on internal group structures rather than the ‘charisma’ of its individuals.⁶⁰ Most conspicuous amongst these structures are community laws and regulations which, according to Ray, required specialised skills that mandated study and the preservation of texts. As a result of this transformation, the Buddhist community saw a decline in the prevalence of forest monks and, *a fortiori*, *arahats* (fully realised saints).⁶¹ Similarly, Ryokai Shiraishi writes on how the *bhikkhu* community ‘historically shifted from wandering to cenobitic life’. Rather than identifying a tension, Shiraishi notes the shift more in terms of a paradox as ‘two different lifestyles co-existing’ but from the perspective of awakened beings.⁶²

The importance of solitude and other ascetic practices, as found in various verses of the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*, are cited by Ray as essential facets of authentic Buddhist renunciant life.⁶³ Ray usefully summarises verses that show how solitude supports meditation ‘physically and socially’ as well as ‘psychologically and spiritually’ in a way that is impossible ‘in company’.⁶⁴ For Ray, the antiquity of texts like the *Theragāthā*, *Therīgāthā* and particularly the *Suttanipāta* represent a more authentic portrait of renunciant life in early Buddhist literature.⁶⁵ Their verses are used by Ray to contrast the praise for these practices with the attitudes of other monks who eschew solitary places for village dwellings.⁶⁶ Moreover, Ray also perceives the laments of *arahat* Pārāpariya⁶⁷ about the ‘current behaviour of monks’ as witness to a shift from the original example of the Buddha’s forest practice towards monasticism and with it, a laxity within the community.⁶⁸

One of the most prominent features of Ray’s study is his assessment of Buddhaghosa’s treatment of the *dhutaṅgas* — a set of thirteen ascetic practices — in his

⁶⁰ Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, pp. 24-26 and p. 40, n. 43.

⁶¹ Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, p. 18.

⁶² ‘One of the most remarkable points, it seems to us, is that the Buddha is seen not only in an *ārāma* in the forest but also in a town with his many disciples, and addressing a congregation.’ Ryokai Shiraishi, *Asceticism in Buddhism and Brahmanism. A Comparative Study* (Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1996), p. 162.

⁶³ Ray, *Buddhist Saints* p. 79ff.

⁶⁴ Ray, *Buddhist Saints* p. 84.

⁶⁵ Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, pp. 62-64.

⁶⁶ Th 962.

⁶⁷ Th 920-48.

⁶⁸ Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, pp. 96-99.

fifth century compendium of meditation called the *Visuddhimagga*.⁶⁹ The *Visuddhimagga* list has a basis in a smaller canonical list which includes the ‘forest dweller’ (*ārañṇaka*).⁷⁰ According to Ray, Buddhaghosa’s modification of the *dhutaṅgas* is idiomatic of his scholarly inclinations and a distortion.⁷¹ It is, for Ray, an example of the marginalisation of asceticism and the silencing of forest practice in favour of the study of texts, which is more conducive to Buddhaghosa’s busy, noisy and crowded monasticism.⁷² Therefore, for Weber, Ray and others, solitary wandering monks followed a paradigm set by the Buddha as a ‘forest saint’ but prevailed only as part of Buddhist prehistory. I will adduce evidence of commentarial passages that warn of the dangers of attachment to monastic life and about the value physical seclusion.⁷³ Such evidence, I argue, presents a more balanced attitude to forest practice in the commentaries than has been previously presented by Ray and others.

By contrast, Trevor Ling portrayed the Buddha as a socio-political agent of change and a philosopher whose teachings would have resonated with Karl Marx.⁷⁴ Any tension between forest- and town-dwelling would be dismissed in favour of a monk as essentially communal. Ling suggested that community is optimal and that the monastery (*ārāma*) dispenses all that a *bhikkhu* requires:

The Saṅgha provides the right conditions for the practice of meditation – the restructuring of consciousness along non-individualistic lines; it also provides the maximum facilities for continued conditioning of consciousness away from the individualism in all the ordinary, everyday actions of life.⁷⁵

Presumably, the forest-dweller would be dissonant with what Ling conceived to be the wholly communitarian value of Buddhist monasticism. Notwithstanding Ling’s contribution to the study of Buddhist social obligations as a force for good, his

⁶⁹ Vism 59-83. English translation found at Ñāṇamoli Thera, *The Path of Purification. Translation of the Visuddhimagga* (Kandy: BPS, 1956; repr. 2010), pp. 53-77.

⁷⁰ A II 219-21.

⁷¹ Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, p. 317.

⁷² Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, p. 18.

⁷³ See my exploration of the commentaries to the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* and the *Mahāsuññata-sutta* in Chapter 1 and the *Mūlapariyāya-sutta* in Chapter 4.

⁷⁴ Trevor Ling, *The Buddha: Buddhist Civilization in India and Ceylon* (London: Temple Smith, 1973), p. 173.

⁷⁵ Ling, *The Buddha*, p. 126.

assessment overlooks individual principles of ascetic endeavour and tends to overstate the function of social responsibility.⁷⁶

Lance Cousins challenged perceived tensions between practice and study and their correspondences with forest- and town-dwelling⁷⁷ by examining a prominent canonical passage and separate commentarial material. The former relates to an argument between *dhammayogins* (those who are ‘devoted to dhamma’) and *jhāyins* (meditators).⁷⁸ Past scholars have uncritically projected a later interpretation of *dhammayogin* as *dhammakhatika* (preacher). In doing so, they perceive the passage as a straightforward example of the historical conflict between preachers and meditators. However, instead of a tension, Cousins convincingly argued that the main concern of the passage relates to haughty truth claims relating to either knowledge or meditation. Cousins concluded that not only the *jhāyin* but the *dhammayogin* too is capable of realisation.⁷⁹ Cousins went on to examine commentarial texts to show that there is no evidence of a bifurcation between village-dwelling scholar monks and forest-dwelling meditator monks prior to Buddhaghosa’s time.⁸⁰ Cousins concluded that there is no real tension between scholars and meditators and that mental cultivation was part of both lifestyles.

Bradley S. Clough has suggested that a bifurcation between the residential vocations of forest-dwelling (*ārañṇavāsi*) and village-dwelling (*gāmaṇvāsi*) and their corresponding occupational vocations is a historical phenomenon.⁸¹ Clough asserts that

⁷⁶ It was a more ‘radical’ idea of the Buddhists to live closer to communities/cities than in remote places. Ling, *The Buddha*, p. 128. For an excellent review of Ling’s theories see David L. Snellgrove, ‘In Search of the Historical Sākyamuni’, *South Asian Review*, 7 (1974), pp. 151–58. Snellgrove highlights Ling’s supposition that Buddhism was originally a humanistic teaching that became theistic by King Aśoka’s time and that the Buddha originally aimed to ‘change the world’. Snellgrove dismisses these suggestions by arguing that, *inter alia*, Buddhists throughout history acknowledged the importance of the Buddha’s transcendental state (pp. 153-54).

⁷⁷ As Bradley S. Clough notes, forest-dwelling and town-dwelling are not fully concordant with practice and learning respectively since not all forest-dwellers were rigorous meditators and urban monasteries taught meditation. Bradley, S. Clough, *Early Indian and Theravāda Buddhism: Soteriological Controversy and Diversity* (Amherst: Cambria, 2012), p. 181.

⁷⁸ A III 355-56. See Lance Cousins, ‘Scholar Monks and Meditator Monks Revisited’, in *Destroying Māra Forever: Buddhist Ethics Essays in Honor of Damien Keown*, ed. by John Powers and Charles S. Prebish (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2009), pp. 31-46.

⁷⁹ Cousins, *Scholar Monks and Meditator Monks*, p.39.

⁸⁰ Cousins, *Scholar Monks and Meditator Monks*, p.42.

⁸¹ Bradley, S. Clough, *Early Indian and Theravāda Buddhism: Soteriological Controversy and Diversity* (Amherst: Cambria, 2012).

not only are they seen as distinct vocations throughout the three periods of Buddhism, but that the vocation of study is the ‘preferred basis of saṅgha life’ including in ancient times.⁸² As canonical evidence for the latter point, Clough cites the *arahats* Sāriputta and Moggallāna, as exemplars of ‘learning’ and ‘praxis’ respectively and concludes that the ‘man of knowledge’ was the preferred choice.⁸³ In a separate article that both supports and challenges some of Cousins’ earlier findings, Clough takes the *dharmayoga* and *jhāyin* passage as a canonical example of a separate conflict,⁸⁴ namely between knowledge-based and absorption-based paths, or insight (*vipassanā*) and tranquillity (*samatha*) respectively. In doing so, Clough effectively returns to an older discussion raised by Louis de La Vallée Poussin which Cousins tried to advance in his work.⁸⁵

More recently, Shayne Clarke, following Schopen, asserts that the *vinaya* (discipline) provides the ‘nitty gritty’ of what monks actually did whilst *sutta/sūtra* (discourse/teaching) deals with only philosophical matters.⁸⁶ Clarke’s approach is to present extant *vinaya* sources and epigraphical evidence of ‘settled monasticism’. At the same time, he highlights more than one ‘ideal’ to Buddhist renunciate life of which the ‘forest-renunciant’ is just one.⁸⁷ Clarke uses the *vinaya* to make a compelling case that family still mattered across later Buddhist monastic traditions.⁸⁸ This is a remarkable claim and challenges the very foundation of the renouncer ideal.⁸⁹

⁸² Clough, *Early Indian and Theravāda Buddhism*, p.166.

⁸³ Although Clough does not state why. *Early Indian and Theravāda Buddhism*, p.169.

⁸⁴ See Bradley, S. Clough, ‘Paths of Monastic Practice from India to Sri Lanka: Responses to L.S. Cousins’ Work on Scholars and Meditators’, *Buddhist Studies Review*, No. 35 1-2 (2018), 29-45 (p. 42).

⁸⁵ Cousins, *Scholar Monks and Meditator Monks*, p. 39.

⁸⁶ Shayne Clarke, *Family Matters in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013), pp. 10-11.

⁸⁷ Clarke, *Family Matters*, p. 7.

⁸⁸ Clarke critiques scholars who have presented a one-sided ‘anti-familial’ picture from the *suttas*. He presents extant *vinaya* examples that speak of fathers and sons who ‘co-renounced’ (p. 24), how the *Saṅgha* did not strictly forbid nuns who became pregnant (p.148) and family-friendly’ monasticism as just one other form of Buddhist ‘monasticisms’ that were accepted (p. 161).

⁸⁹ The Indian renouncer, or *saṃnyāsin*, was encouraged not to travel in his former region firstly to avoid attachment to his family and to avoid greater respect than if he was anonymous. Patrick Olivelle, *The Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣads. Hindu Scriptures in Asceticism and Renunciation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 102.

Solitude as a concept

One of the first scholars to take notice of solitude was I. B. Horner. Horner wrote that whilst the Brahmins claim companionship with Brahmā and Christian saints feel unity with God, Buddhists seek the harmony of inner stillness.⁹⁰ Horner viewed the decline in the value of solitude in later texts as evidence of the devaluation of the *arahat*, citing the *Milindapañha*⁹¹ imagery of the *arahat* who enters ‘the city of *nibbāna*’. By living in close association with other *arahats*, Horner observed, the *arahat* loses his ‘lonely grandeur’ and is brought down to the level of the unenlightened.⁹²

Discussion of solitude as a concept begins to take shape in a useful but short note about ‘inwardness’ by Malcom Hudson for the *Pali Buddhist Review*.⁹³ Hudson identified solitude as central to finding truth. Solitude entails leaving behind the crowd (*kāyaviveka*) and a gradual stilling of the mind (*cittaviveka*) permitting a deepening awareness of *dukkha* and craving (*taṇhā*) leading to ‘ultimate solitude’ (*nibbāna*). Whilst Hudson appears to focus on how this process supports wisdom, he neglects that *cittaviveka* is the stilling of unskillful affective components of the mind before they are removed.

Wijayaratna puts the emphasis on a monk’s interiority to define his solitude. He argues that physical withdrawal from people is just an initial step towards ‘true’ solitude:

[physical withdrawal] was necessary as a preliminary step to leave the quarrels of society in order to follow the path of renunciation and to progress in the contemplative life, but simple separation from society was not a means of attaining detachment.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ I.B. Horner, *The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected. A Study of the Arahan* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1936), pp. 148.

⁹¹ Thought to be dated around 2nd Century BCE and not formally part of the Pāli Canon apart from in the Theravāda tradition in Burma. Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), p. 76.

⁹² Horner, *Man Perfected*, pp. 184-85.

⁹³ Malcolm Hudson, ‘Note on Solitude/Inwardness’, *Pali Buddhist Review*, 1 No.2 (1976), 103-04.

⁹⁴ Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, p. 116.

Wijayaratna cites the *Bhaddekaratta-sutta*⁹⁵ from which he identifies ‘ideal solitude’ as the mental attitude in which past and future are relinquished and the present is mastered.⁹⁶ He cites this as an example of a teaching that stresses ‘inner solitude’ without advocating ‘physical solitude’.⁹⁷

Consistent with what he later called the Pāli ‘imaginaire’,⁹⁸ Steven Collins suggested that forest withdrawal is largely a metaphor for a psychological approach. Collins was one of the first scholars to encourage readings of imagery and myth. However, much of Collins’ thoughts on solitude are contained in an earlier comparative study of Buddhist and Christian monasticisms that addresses problems with Louis Dumont’s earlier claim that the Indian Renouncer is an ‘outworldly individual’.⁹⁹ Collins made several important criticisms and redressed assumptions on what the ‘world’¹⁰⁰ actually means in Indian religions compared with Christianity. Collins argued how a Christian monk is ‘single’ in that he is celibate, rather than physically ‘alone’ and that his ‘singleness’ encompasses not only his purpose but also places him outside of society in a metaphorical sense. For Collins, abandoning society represents a shift in an ascetic’s interiority and not necessarily in his location. Individual descriptions of physical withdrawal, whether of a Buddhist monk or Christian desert father, are facets of how ascetic life is conceived within those traditions. All the various expressions for solitude and ‘leaving society’ in both Buddhism and Christianity, according to Collins, ‘refer ultimately or *really* [my emphasis] to an inner renunciation or ‘detachment’, to which

⁹⁵ M III 187-89.

⁹⁶ Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, pp. 111-14. Bhikkhu Ñāṇānanda suggests that the elliptical compound *bhaddekaratta* should be translated along the lines of the ‘love of solitude’. Bhikkhu Ñāṇānanda, *Ideal Solitude - An Exposition of the Bhaddekaratta Sutta* (Kandy: BPS, 1973). Ñāṇānanda’s conclusions are based on a comparison with the *Theranāma-sutta* (S II 282-84), in which the Buddha explains that ‘dwelling alone’ is complete when one abandons the past and future. Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi translate *bhaddekaratta* as, ‘a single excellent night’, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Boston: Wisdom, 2009), p. 1342, n. 1210).

⁹⁷ Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, p. 116.

⁹⁸ Collins applies the term *imaginaire* to represent the ‘nonmaterial imaginative thought world constituted by texts’ that is complementary to the ‘material world’, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 73.

⁹⁹ In that the renouncer lives outside of society, whereas everyone else is ‘inworldly’ Steven Collins, ‘Monasticism, Utopias and Comparative Social Theory’, *Religion*, 18 (1998), 101-135, (p. 102).

¹⁰⁰ Collins pointed out that the term *loka* has several connotations, which may have some resemblance to Christian uses, however it is not used in the description of what is abandoned by the renouncer. *Monasticism*, p. 105.

physical or social location is irrelevant.¹⁰¹ The basic import of this language is, for Collins, of psychological rather than geographical change; an exchange of social role, not space.

Collins went on to claim that ‘physical aloneness’ even though permitted, was ‘by no means a regular condition’.¹⁰² Unfortunately, Collins did not elaborate on this assertion apart from quoting other scholarly works and, instead, focused on primary sources that detail the significance of mental non-attachment in Buddhist discourses on seclusion. Thus, it is mental solitude, as ‘singleness’ achieved through extraordinary powers of meditative concentration that Collins characterised as an ascetic’s ‘true aloneness’ and social status as celibate ‘world renouncer’.¹⁰³

Elizabeth Harris is similarly circumspect about the role of physical withdrawal. In a discussion on the tension between compassion and non-attachment, Harris makes a useful point on how non-attachment leads to clearer awareness of others. Greater clarity stirs compassion which in turn aids concentration (*samādhi*).¹⁰⁴ I agree with Harris when she writes that the practice of withdrawal from others, if clung to, could be used to elevate an ascetic’s pride. Harris cites the *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta* to argue that physical solitude is only valuable if predicated on meditative practice.¹⁰⁵ Whilst physical seclusion must be purposefully directed to meditative purification, such claims downplay the natural remedial effect of physical solitude that might be possible even before what might be called the ‘mystical’ experience of meditation.

Anālayo more recently weaved together a collection of passages employing a number of different Pāli terms and presented these under the general title ‘seclusion’:

¹⁰¹ In Buddhism for example, *viveka* (‘solitude’), *nekkhamma* (‘renunciation’ or ‘leaving’), and *anagāriyā* (‘homelessness’); and in Christianity *anachōrēsis* (‘withdrawal’ or ‘renunciation’), *hēsuchia* (‘solitude’, ‘quiet’ or simply ‘hesychasm’) and *erēmia* (‘the desert’); Collins, *Monasticism*, p. 106.

¹⁰² Collins, *Monasticism*, p. 108.

¹⁰³ ‘Sociologically, the (ideal-typical) monastic renouncer is one whose formal status is that of dissociation from the ‘world’ of inter-connected reproductive-kinship relations and obligations. Such a person is...an — at least potentially — independent and autonomous individual, by virtue of this dissociation and the various ideals of single-mindedness, inner unification and freedom which it makes possible’. Collins. *Monasticism*, p. 107.

¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth J. Harris, *Detachment and Compassion in Early Buddhism. Bodhi Leaves Publication No. 141* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1997), p. 4 and 10.

¹⁰⁵ Harris, *Detachment and Compassion in Early Buddhism*, p. 2. In the *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta* (D III 36-57), the ascetic Nigrodha is of the opinion that the Buddha is a recluse and prefers being alone to debate.

(pa)viveka, paṭisallāna and ekavihāriya.¹⁰⁶ Whilst serving as a useful summary of passages, Anālayo does not differentiate the nuances of these terms and interprets them mainly from their literal aspects. Anālayo notes that physical seclusion is for those who have achieved a maturity in practice.¹⁰⁷ The assumption seems to be that dwelling in ‘remote places’ must always pertain to forest-dwelling and its association with hardship and fear.

Summary and discussion of secondary literature

Discussions about solitude in the Pāli Canon are scattered across various scholarships. The more prominent have focussed on the history of Buddhist monasticism as a bifurcation between practice and learning. For Weber, the Buddhist renouncer is a ‘solitaire’ or asocial individual. From Ling’s perspective, the monk may be characterised as a ‘communard’ whose needs are wholly provided by his group.¹⁰⁸ According to Ray, solitude, in the form of wandering and forest meditation, is the *lebensform* of original Buddhist monks. Whilst I have benefited from some areas of Ray’s exploration of key passages and sympathise with his motivation to uncover the value of forest withdrawal in the Pāli Canon, I find his overall argument problematic if we consider a wider exploration of solitude as a concept and its value in both canonical and commentarial passages. Clough’s study suggests that meditation is not the only path to realisation. For him, the diversity of approaches is not only a reflection of lingering disagreements between scholars and meditators, but also reveals an underlying tension between insight- and tranquillity-based approaches to meditation. And, whilst Clough’s studies draw

¹⁰⁶ Bhikkhu Anālayo, *From Grasping to Emptiness – Excursions into the Thought-world of the Pali Discourses 2* (New York: The Buddhist Association of the United States, 2010).

¹⁰⁷ Anālayo, *From Grasping to Emptiness*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁸ I use the terms ‘solitaire’ and ‘communard’ only in their abstract senses of, respectively, a lonely individual and community member to illustrate opposing values. A ‘solitaire’ can be described as the ‘companionless voyager’, see Barbara Taylor, ‘Separations of Soul: Solitude, Biography, History’, *The American Historical Review*, 114 no. 3 (2009), 640-651, p. 643. Generally, a ‘communard’ is a member of a commune. Historically, the term ‘communard’ was applied pejoratively to all sympathisers and members of a Marxist resistance group that arose in Paris in 1871 with a shared concern for political change. See Martin Breugh, *The Plebeian Experience: A Discontinuous History of Political Freedom*. Translated by Lazer Lederhendler (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 173-74.

attention to the vocational choice of learning for some monastics, he also highlights the superiority of those attained through practice.¹⁰⁹

Wijayaratna seems to acknowledge separation from conventional society as a salutary underlying principle of renunciation but which is not perpetual. With this I have no contention. What Wijayaratna has not adequately addressed, however, is how the texts recognise that the monastery can sometimes mirror society at large. I will suggest that since a monk/nun must constantly protect themselves from worldly desires, the monastery may not always provide the optimum conditions for spiritual life. Consequently, withdrawal from the group is often highlighted as normative for ordinary monastics.

Schopen consistently challenges the authority of the texts and critiques those who rely heavily on them, as opposed to archaeological evidence, as historical sources. For Schopen it is imprudent to assume that monks would have wandered and practiced forest-withdrawal at later times when some would have even possessed property and made donations.¹¹⁰ According to Schopen, the *vinaya* offers only a symbolic or idealised abstraction at best and, at worst, a picture of ascetic life distorted by the disciplinary perspective of *vinaya* compilers.¹¹¹

However, we need not conclude that the practice of forest-dwelling was anything apart from a ‘dead-letter’.¹¹² For scholars like Schopen and Clarke, it would be wrong to suggest that all monks would have practised forest solitude because this is what, we are told in *suttas*, the Buddha did and all monks were exhorted to do. According to Clarke, the historical legacy of the wandering forest-dwelling monk is that of his failure to leave any traceable records.¹¹³ However, there is epigraphical evidence that give us a more balanced picture. A donative inscription in Brāhmī Prakrit is found on a *stūpa* in Bedsā in the Pune District.¹¹⁴ This inscription is made in honour of a forest monk (*āraṇaka*)

¹⁰⁹ Clough, *Paths of Monastic Practice*, pp. 32-34.

¹¹⁰ Gregory Schopen, ‘Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism’, *History of Religions*, 31 No.1 (1991), 1-23, p. 7.

¹¹¹ Schopen, *Deaths, Funerals, and the Division of Property*, pp. 357-59.

¹¹² Schopen, *Deaths, Funerals, and the Division of Property*, p. 359.

¹¹³ Clarke, *Family Matters*, p. 10.

¹¹⁴ Heinrich Lüders, ‘A List of Brāhmī Inscriptions from the Earliest Times to About A.D. 400 With the Exception of Those of Aśoka’, in *Appendix to Epigraphia Indica Vol. X*, (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1912), pp. 1–296. (p. 120, No. 1110).

and ‘mendicant’ (*peḍapātika*) named Gōbhūti by his pupil Asālamita and is thought to be from the second century BCE. On this evidence Pia Brancaccio observes,

...that at this time wandering forest hermits who did not permanently reside in *vihāras* played an important role and enjoyed high standing within some Buddhist communities. This is perfectly in line with evidence offered by one of the earliest known Buddhist texts, the Rhinoceros *sūtra*, which advocates the merits of solitary asceticism...¹¹⁵

Rāhula Walpola, too, cited archaeological evidence of *āraṇyavāsins* living in a forest hermitage called Tapovana near Anarādhapura in Ceylon in the tenth century.¹¹⁶ According to later textual sources these forest-dwelling monks became more engaged in study, mirroring in reverse the *gāmaśāsina* monks in mediaeval times who engaged in meditation practice noted by Cousins.¹¹⁷ All this is evidence of how study and practice are both important since earliest times. It also suggests that *āraṇṇaka* may be understood as a more fluid term than its strict association with the *dhutaṅgas* suggests. Rather, it may reasonably apply to all monastics who apply themselves to regular periods of seclusion even if many of whom lived or continue to live in monasteries or hermitages.¹¹⁸

Of the survey of historical discussion, I am mostly inspired by Cousins’ suggestion that both meditation and study form a continuum of practice in the life of a monk. I will attempt to show how solitude embraces a range of literal, figurative and symbolic meanings and how, according to certain strands of Pāli literature, private meditation in secluded places is a salient feature of ascetic life for most, if not all monks and nuns. This ‘lonely’ perspective of the sources is acknowledged as one of several ‘voices’ that include other dimensions of monastic practice including study, fraternity and preaching. In conceiving how some parts of the texts present ascetic practices as more mainstream, I am inspired by Nicholas Witkowski’s unpublished 2015 PhD dissertation on asceticism in Chinese *vinaya* texts. Witkowski’s research on narratives in these texts show that ascetic practices like ‘rag robe wearing’ (*paṃsukūlā/pāṃśukūla*) and forest-dwelling (*araṇya*) were commonplace and not a vestige of the earliest

¹¹⁵ Pia Brancaccio, *The Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad: Transformations in Art and Religion*, Brill’s Indological Library Vol. 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 52.

¹¹⁶ Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (Colombo: Gunasena, 1956), p. 197 and n. 1.

¹¹⁷ Cousins, *Scholar Monks and Meditator Monks*, p. 44.

¹¹⁸ See Chapter 2 for a discussion on how, according to some canonical passages, the ‘forest monk’ and the ‘village monk’ is not so distinct.

community as others have argued.¹¹⁹ I have also benefitted and been inspired by several textual studies by Rupert Gethin that have uncovered the meditative flavour to the Pāli *nikāyas*, for example in the form of meditative motifs in performative narratives and lists, and as recurring formulae and descriptions of the path.¹²⁰

Collins' imaginaire is a world conceived in texts and inhabited by its readers and audience in their imaginations. This world might be different from social reality but, nevertheless, influences how a monk lives and behaves in that reality. Collins demonstrated the importance of reading religious texts imaginatively and how values can be communicated to its audiences through myths, imagery and storytelling as complementary to the 'systematic thought' of its doctrine.¹²¹

Whilst Collins' methodological approach offers much inspiration to my own study, his own treatment of solitude is limited. For Collins and others, solitude is most satisfactorily presented largely as a spiritual metaphor for an inner state. In other words, solitude is seen from the perspective of attainment of increasingly refined states of 'singleness'. Its literal significance really applies to a monk's social status as a celibate. Such conceptions can and should be included as what it means to be spiritually 'at one' or 'alone'. Nevertheless, as I will argue, forest-dwelling is both practical as well as ideational and is a salient feature of the path as envisaged in many important passages. The prescriptive element of the texts that serves to inspire monks and nuns to occasionally withdraw from the group for meditation is something that Collins neglected to fully examine. Nevertheless, Collins' observations raise a legitimate question of the difference between how the texts may have been conceived by the compilers and how they were apprehended by those who use the texts.

¹¹⁹ Nicholas Witkowski, *The Ascetic Lifestyle in the Early Indian Buddhist Monastery: A study of the Dhūtagaṇa Practices in the Vinaya Tradition* (Stanford University, unpublished PhD thesis, 2015).

¹²⁰ I refer to the following studies by Gethin in particular: *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 'Mythology as Meditation: From the Mahāśudassana Sutta to the Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtra', *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 28, (2006), 63-112; 'Schemes of the Buddhist Path in the Nikāyas and Āgamas', in *Mārga: Paths to Liberation in South Asian Buddhist Traditions*, ed. by Cristina Pecchia and Vincent Eltschinger (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2020), pp. 5-77 and 'Reading Repetitions in the *Samyutta-nikāya* and Early *Abhidhamma*: From the *Mahā-vagga* to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*', in *Research on the Samyukta-āgama*, ed. by Dhammadinnā (Taipei: Dharma Drum, 2020), pp. 109-69.

¹²¹ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. xiii.

I suggest that even though expressions like ‘ideal solitude’ and ‘singleness’ are relevant to our understanding, they tend to privilege the minds of those who are attained to stages of meditative concentration or sanctity, but not the practical aspects of meditation and their purpose. The point I wish to stress is that what Collins refers to as the ‘sociological constant’ of an ‘empirical individual’ is only ever fully realised at the end of the path. The maxim ‘everywhere is a forest dwelling’¹²² expresses the reality of the *arahat* who has eradicated all affective and cognitive causes of suffering. These include craving or lust (*kāmarāga*) and the ‘I am’ conceit (*asmimāna*). According to Buddhist thought, lust takes longer to uproot fully than other roots of mental defilement.¹²³ Likewise, conceit is only fully eradicated at the end of the path.¹²⁴ Any sense of ‘I am’, however subtle, that persists even for one who has abandoned views towards individuality (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*),¹²⁵ is compared to the faint smell of cow dung lingering on a cleaned cloth.¹²⁶

The purpose of this study

It seems to me that the interest to recover a historically authentic picture of how monks practised has taken precedence over better understanding of solitude as a concept in the Pāli Canon. Many of the events portrayed in the canon could be reflecting what happened at the time of the Buddha, or they could have been imagined by the compilers, or they could be reflecting a different kind of reality at the time of its compilation. Although my study might overlap with discussions about the origins and historical development of forest-dwelling monks, this is not its main concern.

¹²² Vism 91, 11. Although the story from which this maxim is taken reflects a state of affairs at least five hundred years after the *nikāyas* were compiled, the expression as an allusion to a liberated mind does have a canonical basis in the verse line: ‘My body lives in the village, yet my mind has gone to the forest.’ My translation of Th 14: *gāme me vasati kāyo araṇṇaṃ me gato mano*. However, we need not conclude that Buddhaghosa’s overall point is to say that forest withdrawal is only a state of mind. The maxim, rather, seems to be a candid admission of the realities of meditative life whilst living in a monastery in the fifth or sixth century. See the discussion in Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, p. 109-100.

¹²³ Lust (*rāga*) is considered a lesser fault than hatred (*dosa*) or delusion (*moha*) but takes longer to uproot, A I 200, 1-2.

¹²⁴ D II 92-93.

¹²⁵ Twenty views which see self as related to any or all the *khandhas*. M I 300.

¹²⁶ S III 130-1.

There are other discussions that a study of Buddhist solitude could contribute towards. The obvious one is how Buddhist solitude compares with contemporary perceptions of loneliness or to the solitude of other religions. There are also important ongoing debates in the field of engaged Buddhism and the role of monastics in society. Whilst I hope this study can contribute to these discussions, they are also not the focus here. What is of primary interest to me are the subjects of meditation, spiritual fulfilment or, more generally, human flourishing. There are of course real challenges that limit a critical study of the thought world of what are essentially meditation masters culturally and geographically removed from the researcher by two and a half millennia.¹²⁷ However, I believe that these methodological difficulties are somewhat eased by recognising solitude as a universal phenomenon. One of my arguments is that although the solitude of meditating Buddhist monks and *arahats* is transcendent, there are important factors inherent in the process of spiritual purification that chime with ordinary, non-religious experiences of solitude.

As I stated earlier, my main aim is to fully understand how solitude is conceived within the *Weltanschauung* of a particular Buddhist tradition. At the heart of Buddhist discourse are practical answers to understanding suffering and its end. As such, I am exploring ‘solitude’ in relation to how the Pāli Canon expresses a problem (suffering or *dukkha*), its cause (craving or *taṇhā*), its solution (*nibbāna*) and the means of gradually solving the problem (the *ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*, the Noble Eightfold Path and the gradual path). In doing so, I examine as fully as possible the extent to which solitude is, as a religious concept, expressed as both a means and an end.

There are three problems that I wish to address in this dissertation. Firstly, there seems to be a paradox in the way solitude contrasts with community life in the Pāli texts. This paradox can be understood by and overcome when one is liberated from all mental defilements, has transcended all views and achieves a lasting happiness that is untarnished by worldly gain and loss. Less obvious is how two equally valid arenas — forest and community — intersect and how an ordinary monk/nun seeking spiritual happiness and liberation navigates and prioritises the two. Secondly, since the English word ‘solitude’ is ambiguous, it does not always lend itself to what is being expressed in the Pāli Canon. Although the texts present examples of skilful and unskilful ‘aloneness’,

¹²⁷ For a discussion of these methodological difficulties, see Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, pp. 4-6.

there is no formal expression of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ solitude. Thirdly, despite comprehensive discussions on the inner process of meditation, the rich and numerous references to physical seclusion (*kāyaviveka*) as part of the practice of meditation is largely overlooked in secondary literature.

Although historical questions are not my focus, I reject any assertion that *suttas* cannot be descriptive of real-world matters. ‘Abstract’ points of doctrine may be their main concern but narratives as literature may also reflect a variety of external referents. A case in point might be the *Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta* which, through its rich imagery, provides a nuanced teaching on the vicissitudes of kingly life.¹²⁸ For Collins, this is not a story of the social reality of kings, but the renunciation of violence.¹²⁹ Whilst the story exists as myth, it still speaks of the realities of crime and punishment, social change and the challenges of righteous rule.¹³⁰

For the purposes of this study, I take the Pāli *nikāyas* as overall prescriptive texts that envisage how the Buddhist path is to be practised. As such, they embody the values of their original compilers, and, these values prescribe — to those who first heard or read them and to those throughout the history of Buddhist monasticism — how the everyman monk and everywoman nun should live. We have already discussed compelling epigraphical evidence of monks who were clearly inspired by the texts to be forest meditators. Further evidence to support how the *nikāyas* have been read prescriptively in more modern times, can be found in the example of Ajhan Mun who established the Thai Forest Tradition. Mun spent much of his early career as a forest monk, often living and practising in forests and caves, guided by the Buddha’s example.¹³¹

Given that solitude as a literary concept in Pāli texts has several connotations that are both literal and figurative, it seems appropriate to ask from the perspective of exploring the texts prescriptively, ‘how did the compilers of the Pāli Canon wish to present ‘solitude’ as part of the Buddhist path to liberation?’ Furthermore, current

¹²⁸ D III 58-79. The story narrates impermanence and rebirth and contrasts the righteous duty of a ‘wheel turning-king’ (*cakkavattin*) with the practice of a monk whereby the former achieves rebirth in heaven and the latter escapes rebirth.

¹²⁹ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 495.

¹³⁰ Collins seems to acknowledge this. See *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 421, n. 8 and p. 422, n. 10.

¹³¹ Ācariya Mahā Boowa, Ñāṇasampanno, *The Venerable Ācariya Mun Bhūridatta Thera: A Spiritual Biography*. Translated by Bhikkhu Dick Silaratano (Baan Taad, Amphur Meung, Udun Thani, Thailand: Forest Dhamma Books and Baan Tad Forest Monastery, 2010), pp. 25-42.

discussions of Buddhist meditation leave a gap in the treatment of physical seclusion and appear to marginalise forest withdrawal. Therefore, a related question is ‘to what extent is physical seclusion envisaged as a value in the Buddhist path?’

Both literal and figurative notions of solitude are elaborated by later exegetical texts but how accurate a reflection are they of the *suttas* and how do they differ? By exploring corresponding treatments of solitude in the commentaries, I will also explore claims that physical solitude is glossed over by Buddhaghosa and the commentarial tradition and how else solitude is to be understood as a concept in Pāli literature.

Literary approaches to the Pāli Canon

My principal focus is the thought-world of the Theravāda tradition, or what Heinz Bechert labelled ‘canonical Buddhism’¹³² encompassing a part of what Collins more poetically called the Pāli ‘imaginaire’. Collins points out that redacting a text into the Pāli imaginaire was the result of a choice and doing so affords it special status. It is therefore reasonable to investigate why that decision was made.¹³³ Following Collins, I treat the Pāli *suttas* as what has been passed to us as a redacted whole and as part of a closed thought-world. Rather than assuming original versions of prominent *suttas*, I consider them as literary constructs of perhaps several versions taught by the Buddha over his forty-year career, remembered and redacted after the second Buddhist council.¹³⁴ In other words, the Pāli imaginaire’s will not be the only vision of Buddhist solitude, but one specific to Pāli Buddhist texts remembered and redacted as one whole and which must be considered against other canons. Moreover, within the imaginaire of Pāli literature, we must also consider multiple facets, emphases and perspectives.

My main primary sources are the five canonical collections (*nikāyas*) of discourses preserved in the Pāli language: the *Dīgha*, *Majjhima*, *Saṃyutta*, *Aṅguttara* and *Khuddaka nikāyas*. The *Dīgha* and *Majjhima nikāyas* differ in emphasis but are

¹³² Heinz Bechert, ‘Sangha, State, Society, “Nation”: Persistence of Traditions in “Post-Traditional” Buddhist Societies’, *Daedalus*, 102 no. 1 (1973), 85-95.

¹³³ *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 77; ‘every Pāli text from the premodern period, but only those of which there is a Western edition’ (p. 78).

¹³⁴ Rupert Gettin, ‘Review of Gombrich, Richard F., *What the Buddha Thought*.’ H-Buddhism, H-Net Reviews (January 2012) <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=31586>, accessed July 2014.

considered complementary with the narrative portions of much of the *Dīgha Nikāya* focussing on preaching and the creation of converts and the *Majjhima Nikāya* being mainly characterised by the fundamentals of practice, particularly meditation.¹³⁵ Both the *Samyutta* and *Aṅguttara nikāyas* are mostly absent of narrative content and yet they overlap significantly with the *Dīgha* and *Majjhima nikāyas*.¹³⁶ Like the *Samyutta Nikāya*, the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* is mainly concerned with the edification of monastics. Nevertheless, several passages in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* are directed at the laity.

Whilst the primary four collections are to a great extent homogeneous, it should not be forgotten that they also contain literature that communicate different doctrinal themes in different ways.¹³⁷ The fifth collection of the Pāli Canon — the *Khuddaka Nikāya* — is famously diverse in its antiquity, content and perspective. This collection contains the *Suttanipāta* and *Theragāthā/Therīgāthā* (that are strongly connected with asceticism), the *Niddesa* (which includes commentarial elements as well as *Abhidhamma*-like content),¹³⁸ and the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (stories of the Buddha’s past births).¹³⁹ I include references to these texts in this study as they provide interesting and important conceptions of solitary practice. In doing so, I recognise their distinct and different characteristics and not only consider their conceptions of solitude from the perspective of these characteristics but also as one of several ‘voices’ found within them.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Joy Manné, ‘Categories of Sutta in the Pāli Nikāyas and Their Implication For Our Appreciation of The Buddhist Teaching and Literature’, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 15 (1990), 29-99, p.80-81.

¹³⁶ See discussion in Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p.31. Bodhi elaborates why the *suttas* in the *Samyutta* and *Aṅguttara nikāyas* are also aimed at those already immersed in meditative practice (p.32-36).

¹³⁷ ‘...each displays enormous diversity, somewhat like organisms of the same genera that exhibit minute specific differences absolutely essential for their survival.’ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p.34.

¹³⁸ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Suttanipāta: An Ancient Collection of the Buddha’s Discourses Together with Its Commentaries* (Bristol: PTS, 2017), pp.82-83.

¹³⁹ *Jātaka* stories are not just found in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* but also feature in some *sutta* and commentarial texts. For a summary of the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* see Naomi Appleton, and Sarah Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha: The Mahānipāta of the Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2016), pp.1-2.

¹⁴⁰ For example, in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*, the *Temiya* and *Vessantara jātakas* display different attitudes towards kingship and forest renunciation. These *jātakas* have been studied in depth by Steven Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 423-36 and pp.497-541 and by Appleton and Shaw, *Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha*, pp.12-18.

The Pāli commentaries (*aṭṭhakathās*) are typically used as a source of interpretation on aspects of a particular *sutta*. In this way, we can construe how the Theravāda tradition takes on a considerably early interpretative view of itself.¹⁴¹ I will examine portions of some non-canonical *aṭṭhakathās* in order to develop a wider view from the tradition. My intention is to discover both what the earliest sources say about solitude as well as to explore the extent to which this was adapted by later commentators.

In sum, my reasons for examining a variety of passages across the five *nikāyas* and the commentaries is to explore as fully as possible the different categories and nuances of what is understood by solitude as an umbrella concept. The four primary *nikāyas* are cohesive but also display diversity in style and can even be said to have different agendas. As such, we must be open to uncovering multiple perspectives even within a single genre of literature. Moreover, solitude must be considered alongside other important practices within what might be considered normative.

I have limited my study to Pāli texts largely due to the circumstances of linguistic limitations and the convenience of having gained some knowledge of the Pāli language. We must therefore be open to the possibility that a different picture might emerge as a result of a comparison between the Pāli Canon and Chinese Āgamas. Therefore, I hope this study will contribute towards any such future comparative study.

The general principle adopted is to use English translations of Pāli canonical texts where they exist or adapt them where I think alternative renderings are more suitable. On untranslated commentarial texts, I offer my own translations.¹⁴² My methods began as a survey of terms in Pāli that appear to express notions of ‘aloneness’ or ‘separation’ whilst using the English word ‘solitude’ as a receptacle for various Pāli terms. I examine the form of expression of these terms as they occur in the texts at the level of stock formulae, poetry, narrative and imagery recognising that each form has its own characteristics and that this may require the use of heuristic and conceptual tools to help fully appreciate

¹⁴¹ The Pāli *aṭṭhakathās* were compiled between the fifth and sixth centuries BCE and are based on 1. material recited at the first council (held soon after the Buddha’s *parinibbāna*) and 2. the interpretations of individual *theras* who predate Buddhaghosa and his fifth century contemporaries. Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, p.101. As Rupert Gethin shows, the term *theravāda* used in the Pāli *aṭṭhakathās* primarily refers to the body of knowledge of the *theras* that come down in the commentaries as opposed to the original interpretation formulated at the first council. See *Was Buddhaghosa a Theravādin?*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁴² Many of my translations have been improved thanks to the much-needed help of Rupert Gethin.

them. In Chapter 5, I show how the Buddha's solitude appears as one part of a series of narrative 'scenes' in a story of monastic relations. I also borrow biblical exegetical methods to explore the literary form of the story to see what its structure might reveal. Therefore, rather than adopting a single methodological approach, I rely on a variety of methods dictated by the particular literary form in question.

I have taken the English word 'solitude' in the title of this dissertation and throughout as a matter of convenience. Throughout this study, 'solitude' is a tag or placeholder for a number of related ancient Indian terms and words in Sanskrit/Pāli in order to explore ideas and practices of a premodern thought-world. There is the obvious danger of introducing anachronisms into the latter, but I think that this is avoided by offering a holistic survey of the various terms scattered across the *nikāyas* and their interpretation by the commentarial tradition.

My thesis

The subject of solitude has had partial treatment thanks to discussions on the mystical aspects of meditation, where inner solitude or 'oneness' corresponds to states of absorption or *jhāna*. The meditator puts mental energy into gradually separating himself from unwholesome states that conceal the mind's inner brightness whilst nurturing wholesome states that maintain this unification with the meditation object. When the meditator's mind is stilled, concentrated and perfectly 'at one', the meditator is present to the mind's naked purity and experiences a sublime state of peace.

What is described above, however, is only one part of a layered concept of literal and figurative notions of solitariness. The psychological solitude of this 'oneness' is part of a process of purification with a deeply practical orientation. The literal dimension of withdrawal from company into quiet places, frequently imagined as the forest and other 'empty' places is, I shall argue, more salient than has been appreciated in the past. Physical and mental solitude form a continuum and are both part of the same process. Whilst the *nikāyas* refer to the value of companionship and fraternity, an encounter with lonely and deserted places is also a frequent motif of the texts. The continuum of physical and mental stages of separation begins with the initial stage of 'going forth' (*pabbajjā*) from the home as an ascetic (*samaṇa*) and remains present throughout religious life. The forest-dweller (*ārañṇaka*) of the *nikāyas* adopts this ideal as part of a stricter ascetic lifestyle. For most monks depicted in the *nikāyas*, this continuum is taken up through

regular and repeated meditation in their daily lives. This frequent reference to forest practice betrays the value of physical seclusion to those who first transmitted the Pāli Canon.

A striking feature of renunciate life in Pāli Buddhist sources is forest practice. I will argue how, according to one relatively understudied perspective or ‘voice’ within the Pāli Canon, physical seclusion in some form — but mainly imagined as forest-dwelling — is valued as a natural part of Buddhist renunciate life. Undertaken according to its instructions, physical seclusion forms part of a continuum of the meditative path to realise the end of suffering. From this perspective of the Pāli Canon, I will suggest that the term *ārañṇaka*, can be conceived as a value that inspires all monks and nuns in meditative life. Although the texts prescribe this value through ascetic exemplars, for most the *ārañṇaka* represents an ideal that connects solitude in terms of practice with the deeper spiritual qualities related to renunciation.

Whilst the authors of the Pāli Canon were guided by the ideal of forest withdrawal, frequent references to physical seclusion are complemented by instructions that show how monks and nuns are obligated to each other and the value of religious companionship. For many, the settled way of life is recommended as it is for those who are not ready or suited for forest-dwelling. Yet the ‘call of the forest’ remains at the heart of religious life in the form of regular periods of quiet time away from others for the purpose of inner unification and purification that is essential for progress along the path. For others, meditation is an immersive experience of the forest and secluded landscape. For them, concentration (*samādhi*) is a more visceral experience of a secluded mind and body.

What I also hope will emerge from this study is how the notion of solitude maps onto the discourse of Buddhist happiness more generally. I will attempt to show the texts do this in three ways. Firstly, in an appreciation of the beauty and simplicity of landscape in the mundane world. Secondly, in the form of relative stages of unworldly happiness of oneness or concentration. And thirdly, in terms of the bright depths of the liberated mind which is permanently isolated from mental corruptions. Solitude is therefore placed at the heart of the practice and experience of Buddhist meditation.

Chapter summary

The aim of **Chapter 1** is to explore what is distinctive about renunciation in the *nikāyas* and what they say about notions of solitude in relation to society. I will start with an overview of renunciation in terms of its literal and figurative meanings with reference to renunciatory values of desirelessness, simplicity and contentment.

Buddhist monks are ‘homeless wanderers’ on the path to end suffering. Physical withdrawal from the home is a simple and skilful act of securing an initial stage of religious contentment. Yet rather than being alone, a monk is part of an alternative society — a religious community whose purpose is to support individual spiritual growth and lasting happiness. At the same time, monks maintain a mutual relationship with wider society. They return to the village for alms and share in merit with laypeople. I will explore the paradox of community and solitary life through various *sutta* passages and discuss these values in relation to the first and second *ariyasaccas* or Noble Truths.

I will discuss how the first truth, *dukkha*, is recognised not only in a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the ordinary world prior to renunciation, but sometimes also in the crowded conditions of monastic life. The second truth manifests in forms of both craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) and most insidiously as the seeking out of the pleasures of company instead of the delight in seclusion. I will, therefore, argue that ideals of solitude — maintained in the practical domain of forest withdrawal as well as in psychological attitudes of non-attachment — are envisaged in a monk’s continued and repeated renunciation of ‘society’. However, rather than seen as a tension, community serves to support this ‘lonely path’.

I will continue to explore solitude in terms of the Four Noble Truths in **Chapter 2** by turning to conceptions of the third and fourth noble truth. Taking the fourth truth first, I will discuss how practical and behavioural notions of solitude are linked with the psychological within stages of separation (or seclusion) and unification. I will explore how practical aspects of meditation must be balanced with an appropriate attitude in order for solitude to be ‘right’. Although the Pāli Canon does not formally define ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ solitude’, I will trace how these classifications are, nevertheless, imagined in texts.

I argue that ‘right solitude’ is constituted on both physical and mental solitude as a continuum and will discuss how forest withdrawal in this process has been generally overlooked in scholarship. I will discuss how the value of forest withdrawal is expressed

in terms of a therapeutic response to strong emotions and by the extent to which physical seclusion is identified across the *nikāyas* through repeated formulae. I will also argue that the term ‘forest-dweller’ (*ārañṇaka*) does not necessarily refer to a specialist monk, but can be conceived as a value that encompasses all monks, with few exceptions. I will continue to explore how solitude as the third and fourth noble truths is expressed literally and figuratively in various Pāli terminology and show how, through imagery, *nibbāna* is non-social.

The *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* or ‘Rhinoceros Horn Sutta’ has been subject to discussion since the earliest times in Buddhist scholarship. In **Chapter 3** I explore this famous early Buddhist poem as an essential expression of ‘right solitude’ for a particular ascetic type of monk. Whilst forest-withdrawal is favoured by most scholars as the core concept of the *sutta*, I will argue that the *sutta* is consistent with the term *ekacariyā* (‘living alone’) as an expansive concept that encompasses literal and figurative meanings as well as symbolic ones. I will also explore why this *sutta* has been identified with *paccekabuddhas* and discuss how renunciation, as a more general theme of their hagiographies, can be perceived as a prominent theme of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* itself. The theme of renunciation more generally connects with the idea that a monk must be guarded in monastic life and is in effect continuously renouncing society. As such, the *sutta* also serves to inspire all monks to practice meditation.

The importance of imagery in the articulation of Buddhist thought will be explored in detail in specific relation to the forest and landscape in **Chapter 4**. Whereas past scholarship about nature in Buddhist literature has generated important discussions on the question of environmental ethics, they give cursory attention to the role of solitude in the Buddhist path. I will argue how the imagery of nature and landscape figures both ideationally and practically as an ascetic ‘call to the forest’ that inspires all monks and nuns to value the natural world as a place of meditation.

The role of nature and landscape are firstly discussed through the literary *topos* of the *locus amoenus* — delightful place, or pleasance. I use the *locus amoenus* as a heuristic device to more imaginatively explore the theme of *viveka* (seclusion) that appears in the formulaic expressions for *samādhi* (concentration) discussed in Chapter 2. I will examine how both cultivated and uncultivated landscapes appear as supporting conditions for regular periods of meditative seclusion. I will also show that the *locus amoenus* presents contrasting and paradoxical images of *nibbāna* as the ultimate expression of solitude and discuss these in relation to path imagery. I will continue by

exploring how conceptual metaphors can help us better understand the sensory experience of the forest as part of the rhetorical use of imagery. As such, the ‘call to the forest’ is a deeply practical metaphor continuous with ideological dimensions of renunciation and meditative oneness.

Finally, in **Chapter 5**, I will show how the various themes discussed in this dissertation can be conceived within events of a single extended narrative of the Buddha’s life. The ‘quarrel at Kosambī’ can be viewed as a straightforward appeal for self-restraint and discipline in Buddhist communities. I examine the story from the perspective of solitude as its central feature or ‘fulcrum’ through which the story transforms from *dukkha* to its cessation. I will argue that this story speaks of how the forest is coterminous with ultimate matters of spiritual fulfilment and lasting happiness. The Buddha’s solitude is paradoxically presented in terms of the silent company of animals which, I suggest, foregrounds themes of quietude and simplicity as ideals of forest community life. In line with the commentarial version, we are presented with a story concerned with healing and uniting the community. However, I will argue that withdrawal into the forest, as a salient feature of both canonical and commentarial versions, betrays the concerns of a corpus of texts with meditation at its heart, and, which places forest withdrawal as a central value in the path to the cessation of suffering.

Chapter 1

‘Lonely is the Path’: The Paradox of Renunciation and Community

*Here, a bhikkhu learns the Dhamma...
but he does not spend the day just learning Dhamma.
He does not neglect seclusion; he devotes himself to
the internal tranquillity of mind.¹*

1.1 Introduction

At a broad level, a Buddhist monk/nun is a religious ‘renouncer’, or what later came to be described in the Brahmanical tradition, as a *saṃnyāsin*. Although the renouncer came to be central in the development of Hinduism (and Buddhism), the Brahmanical tradition conceived of an additional ascetic type which is also relevant in our understanding of the Buddhist monk/nun — the *vānaprasthin* or ‘forest dweller’.² Living in conventional society is *dukkha* (suffering/pain) and in an attempt to stop perpetuating *dukkha*, the renouncer abandons his home to live as a mendicant. By ‘going forth’ (*pabbajjā*) from the household into a life of ‘homelessness’, the Buddhist renouncer enters an organised community or ‘Order’, (*Saṅgha*).³ Renunciative life is at once dependent on and of benefit to society in general. This dependence is an epiphenomenon of the act of going

¹ A III 87, 11-15. Translation adapted from Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, p. 699.

² The Brahmanical *saṃnyāsin* can be described as an ideal religious type who abandons the socio-religious norms of the man in the world but who is not defined by his physical withdrawal from society. The *vānaprasthin* became more of an emblematic figure who lives in the imagination of the texts. See Olivelle, *The Renouncer Tradition*, p. 271-72. According to Raj Balkaran the appeal of the *vānaprasthin* lies in his ability to simultaneously straddle the lifestyles of both renouncer and householder. *The Goddess and the King in Indian Myth: Ring Composition, Royal Power and The Dharmic Double Helix* (Oxford: Routledge, 2019), p. 42. Balkaran shows how the *Mahābhārata* narrates four *vānaprastha* archetypes: i. the unmarried celibate type devoted to maintaining the ritual fire but denouncing society; ii. same as the first but is married (considered the main type); iii. the hermit at the third *āśrama* (see footnote in Introduction) and iv. exiled kings who take to the forest. pp.47-49.

³ As Mohan Wijayaratna has shown, the earliest Buddhist community consisted of members who had already renounced. Therefore, *pabbajjā* should not strictly be used to denote ‘leaving home’ but rather entering the religious community, or *Saṅgha*. For Wijayaratna, entering the *Saṅgha* was the most important motive for Buddhist renunciators. *Buddhist Monastic Life*, p. 14.

forth: it accompanies homeless ascetic life and is caused by it. Whilst being dependent on wider society for alms and his fellow renunciators a *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī*⁴ — or ‘one who begs his/her share (of alms)’ — is compelled by his/her individual spiritual effort in mental cultivation. The following is a story that I think sums up the paradox of inhabiting two such religious ideals and neatly sets up the aims of this chapter.

At one time when the Buddha was residing at Sāvathī, sixty of his *bhikkhus* received meditation instruction and wandered to a village for alms. Here, a *vihāra* (monastery) was built for them and the *bhikkhus* agreed to reside there for the rains retreat supported by the mother of Mātika, the village leader. Living in dependence of the village, the *bhikkhus* quickly established some rules. They agreed between themselves that, apart from the morning alms round and evening instruction, they would dwell alone to practice the meditation instruction given to them: ‘two of us shall neither stand nor sit together’. However, if one of them fell ill, a bell should be struck to summon them all together to help. One day, eager to feed the monks, Mātika’s mother rang the bell. The *bhikkhus* duly emerged from their seclusion, each thinking that one of them must be sick. Upon seeing how the *bhikkhus* arrived via separate paths, Mātika’s mother thought that they had had a quarrel. ‘We were sitting separately in meditation’, they explained. The *bhikkhus* proceeded to teach Mātika’s mother the meditation instruction taught to them by the Buddha. Later, the sixty *bhikkhus* became sixty *arahats* thanks to their individual meditative effort and support from a lay follower. Mātika’s mother herself, quickly attained the fruit and path of the non-returner⁵ and with it, psychic abilities.⁶

⁴ Rather than constantly referring to *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* in this dissertation, I use the masculine term *bhikkhu* only for expediency and ease of reading. Although most of the passages mention only *bhikkhus*, it must be understood that they are not aimed exclusively at males. Therefore, where I refer to the term *bhikkhu* in my analysis, I am almost always including the female monastic or *bhikkhunī*. I do occasionally return to referring to both male and female monastics to stress this point. The teachings are neither restricted to a male monastic nor necessarily to non-monastics but, in fact, apply to any practitioner. See: Dhivan Tomas Jones, ‘That bhikkhu lets go both the near and far shores’: meaning and metaphor in the refrain from the uruga verses’, *Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies*, 11 (2016), 71-107, (pp. 74-75).

⁵ The highest state of awakening as a ‘noble person’ apart from the *arahat* — a fully awakened being. See D I 156, 15-19. The non-returner is no longer reborn in the ordinary realm of sense desire but has a final birth as an *arahat* in one or more of the more refined realms in the ‘pure abodes’ (*suddhāvāsa*) of the form realm (*rūpāvacāra*).

⁶ This is an abridged version of a story from the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, Dhpa I 290-97. See Eugene Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends, Translated from the Original Pali Text of the Dhammapada Commentary Part 2* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), pp. 1-7.

A strict injunction that Buddhist renouncers should live separately from one another is not found in Buddhist monastic discipline (*vinaya*).⁷ Nevertheless, the *bhikkhus* in the story meditate alone in keeping with the need for individual effort. This emphasis on self-reliance in Buddhist monasticism is noticeable in the absence of other people in the list of ‘noble lineages’ (*ariyavaṃsas*) on which a *bhikkhu* is to be content with.⁸ Yet in somewhat opposite terms, ‘good friendship’ (*kalyāṇamittatā*) is described as ‘the whole of the religious life’.⁹ In the story, the *bhikkhus*, as ascetics or *samaṇas*,¹⁰ are not only united in their commitment to religious practice but also in their organisation as a cohesive group sharing common rules.¹¹

From the above story, we can conceive the Buddhist renouncer’s life in terms of a dichotomy. On one hand he/she is compelled to experience deepening levels of inner quiet and peace through meditative seclusion (*viveka*)¹² — the ‘call of the forest’. On the other, he/she is drawn to his colleagues in religious life (*sabrahmacārī*), and the rules and organisation of a ‘society’. Notions of ‘society’ are further supported by the role of non-renouncers. A layperson does not have to rely purely on merit making to benefit spiritually from a *bhikkhu* and has the potential for advanced achievement in religious life.

⁷ In the commentary to the *Mahāsuññata-sutta*, the Buddha declares, ‘[I]f it were possible to announce a training precept that two bhikkhus should not live in one place I would do so; but that is not possible.’ Ps IV 156, 21-23. Translation by Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu, *The Greater Discourse on Voidness - The Mahā-Suññatā Sutta and commentary*, Online Edition (Kandy: BPS, 2008), p. 9.

⁸ The four *ariyavaṃsā* are robe, alms food, dwelling-place and spiritual progress, A II 27-29.

⁹ S V 2, 16-17.

¹⁰ The term used for Buddhist ascetic — *samaṇa* — ‘one who strives’ is derived from the Sanskrit *śram* can mean ‘to tire’ as well as ‘to exert oneself’. MW s.v. *śram*.

¹¹ The abstract form of *samaṇa* is *sāmañña* (‘asceticism’). It is interesting that *sāmañña* is also the abstract form of *samāna*, meaning ‘similar, equal, even’, PED s.v. *samāna*, *sāmañña*. I could not find a formal connection between *sāmañña* as ‘asceticism’ and ‘equality’ in the *nikāyas* or commentaries. On the term *sabrahmacārī*, however, the *Theragāthā* commentary states how *sabrahmacārī* is practiced amongst ‘equals’: *tattha sabrahmacārīsū ti, samānaṃ brahmaṃ sīlādi dhammaṃ carantī ti*, Th-a II 166, 28-29. An imaginative connection between asceticism and equality can be gleaned from a passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* which describes a person from any of the four social classes (Khattiyas, Brahmins, Vessas and Suddhas) as losing their previous identity and simply being known as *samaṇa* after they go forth in the Buddha’s teaching. A IV 202, 13-14.

¹² I will discuss the three types of *viveka* in the next chapter.

According to Buddhist thought, however, the lasting happiness of *nibbāna* is unconditioned and untarnished by loss. To fully experience *nibbāna*, the renouncer must turn away and unbind himself from *dukkha* in all its manifestations. How does Pāli literature adopt notions of society within its ascetic framework? How do they intersect with meditative life and what are the implications on the value of solitude? In seeking to answer these questions, I have benefited from some of the work of Steven Collins which I will highlight and attempt to develop.

Although ideal ‘society’ is conceived as an inclusive and supportive environment in Buddhist texts, I will adduce evidence that supports how, according to some important sources, the path for an ordinary *bhikkhu/ bhikkhunī* can also be conceived as ‘lonely’ or ‘narrow’ in that it is to be ultimately carved out individually. Whilst the community or group provides religious instruction and care, a *bhikkhu* is to remain constantly aware how *dukkha* and its cause — mainly desire (*kāma*) for company — manifest religious life. A *bhikkhu*’s physical seclusion as part of regular meditation can therefore be conceived as a second stage of withdrawal that is continuous with the psychological and practical realities of abandoning the ‘home’.

1.2 Renunciation

In this section I will discuss key ideals related to the renunciate path and their relation to the meditative life. I will examine how, alongside these ideals, the Pāli texts recognise and accommodate beings with different capabilities and at stages along the path. I will then explore the extent to which a life-long commitment to renunciation is accommodated as a valid component of a broader vision of socio-religious ideals.

1.2.1 Homelessness: literal and figurative

Steven Collins is one scholar who devoted considerable attention to the role of imagery in Buddhist thought. In *Selfless Persons*, Collins explored how house imagery, in particular, blends together literal and figurative dimensions of renunciation as a more holistic concept.¹³ In this section, I intend to further illuminate the practical and

¹³ Taking the example at S III 9-12 which describes the *muni* (sage) who ‘wanders without home’ (*aniketasāri*) making no ‘ties with the village’. But ‘home’ is each of the first four mental-physical aggregates of personality (*khandhas*) where consciousness is ‘shackled’ by lust. Living ‘without home’ is thus both being separated from both village and the bonds

behavioural elements of renunciate life and the role of physical withdrawal from the group, which Collins stopped short of more fully exploring.¹⁴

When examining the Pāli Canon, we can see how both literal and figurative dimensions play on each other to emphasise notions of renunciation. According to the classic description in the *nikāyas* of ‘going forth’, renunciation is preceded by a reflection about the stark reality of ordinary life as a householder.

Living in a house (*ghara*) is restricted, and cluttered, going forth (*pabbajjā*) is wide open space (*abbhokāsa*). It is not easy to practise the spiritual life in all its fullness and purity, like a polished shell, while living in a house (*agāra*). Why don’t I shave off my hair and beard, put on ochre robes, and go forth from home (*agāra*) into homelessness (*anagāriya*)?¹⁵

The Pāli term *ghara*, ‘house’, is closely related to another term, *gaha*, and both are etymologically¹⁶ related to the Sanskrit root *grha/grabh*, meaning ‘grasp’. *Graha* — one of the Sanskrit equivalents to Pāli *gaha* — is also used in the sense of ‘grasping’.¹⁷ By abandoning *ghara/gaha* the renouncer no longer inhabits the home, but more importantly, he/she abandons grasping or appropriating the home as ‘property’ together with all other former possessions and family. ‘Going forth’, *pabbajjā* is derived from the Sanskrit *pra + √vraj*, ‘to proceed forth’. It sometimes appears in causative form as *pabbājeti*, either ‘to drive out’ as in evil thoughts,¹⁸ or, literally, to ‘make go forth’ or ‘ordain’.¹⁹ The image of ‘wide open-space’ (*abbhokāsa*) represents a *bhikkhu*’s social environment as empty of the crowd, possessions and worldly structures. Yet open space also foreshadows a mental attitude of non-attachment and the absence of objects to make ‘mine’.²⁰ Combining the above psychological and literal themes, one who has gone forth

formed through lust. Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravada Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, repr. 1999), p. 169-70.

¹⁴ As I explained in the Introduction, Collins suggested that behavioural ‘singleness’ relates more to celibacy rather than physical separation.

¹⁵ D I 62-63: *sambādho gharāvāso rajo-patho, abbhokāso pabbajjā. na idaṃ sukaraṃ agāraṃ ajjhāvasatā ekanta-paripuṇṇaṃ ekanta-parisuddhaṃ saṃkha-likhitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ caritaṃ. yan nūnāhaṃ kesa-massuṃ ohāretvā kāsāyāni vatthāni acchādetvā agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajeyyan ti*. Translation adapted from Rupert Gethin, *Sayings of the Buddha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 19.

¹⁶ Pāli *gaha* probably stands for Sanskrit *grha* (‘house’, ‘residence’), DOP s.v. *gaha*.

¹⁷ MW s.v. *graha*.

¹⁸ Mil 11, 4; *pāpakānaṃ malānaṃ pabbājetuṃ pabbajito*.

¹⁹ For example, at Vin I 79,²⁰ where it states that if a youth is less than fifteen years, he can be ordained if he is able to scare away crows.

²⁰ See Chapter 5 for more on the imagery of space.

after hearing the *Dhamma* is described as a ‘noble follower who has ‘come out into the open’.²¹

The practical reality of homeless life is no better captured than in the Pāli *vinaya* which clearly depicts an itinerant lifestyle at the earliest period of Buddhist monasticism:

Now at that time lodgings had not been permitted to *bhikkhus* by the Lord.
So, these *bhikkhus* stayed here and there: in the forest, at the root of a tree, in
a mountain cave, in a cremation ground, in a place deep in the woods, in an
open space, on a pile of straw. In the early mornings, they went out from this
and that place...²²

We can compare the above to more visceral depictions of homelessness which prescribe how a renouncer might endure the harsh realities of literal homelessness such as cold, hunger and illness.²³ Elsewhere, *bhikkhus* who previously resided together for the rains retreat but later resume their wandering are lauded for being ‘well-spoken and learned’ (*cittakatha bahussuta*)²⁴ as well as for their independence from the group:

They’ve gone to Magadha, gone to Kosala,
And some are in Vajjian land.
Like deer that roam free from ties,
The *bhikkhus* dwell without abode.²⁵

The connection between renunciation and forest withdrawal is reflected in the *Āṭānāṭiya-sutta* where *bhikkhus* are said to be living in ‘deep places in the woods’ (*vanapattha*) that

²¹ M III 134, 3-4: ‘...he shaves of his hair and beard, puts on a saffron robe and goes forth into homeless life. It is in this way a noble follower is one who has come out into open space’ (*ariyasāvako abbhokāsagato hoti*). Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p.993.

²² Vin II 146, 4-7. Translation adapted from I. B. Horner, *The Book of Discipline Volume V Cullavagga* (London: Luzac, 1952), p.204: *te 'dha bhikkhū tahaṃ-tahaṃ viharanti araññe rukkha-mūle pabbate kandarāyaṃ giriguhāyaṃ susāne vanapatthe ajjhokāse palālapuñje, te kālass' eva tato-tato upanikkhamanti*.

²³ Sn 966. The commentary, however, reminds us that the homeless one (*anoko*) is metaphorically one who ‘does not make space for abandoned consciousness accompanied by karmically active formations.’ My translation of Nidd I 487,¹¹⁻¹²: *anoko ti abhisāṅkhārasahagataviññāṇassa okāsaṃ na karotī ti pi anoko*.

²⁴ S I 199, 15.

²⁵ S I 199, 19-22:

Magadhaṃ gatā Kosalaṃ gatā ||
ekacciyā pana Vajja-bhūmiyā ||
magā viya asaṅgacārino ||
aniketā viharanti bhikkhavo ti || ||

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p. 297.

are ‘not too noisy, with little talk, an atmosphere of abandonment, remote from people, suitable for retreat’.²⁶ As we shall explore in this and the next chapter, this description overlaps with stock descriptions of physical seclusion (*kāyaviveka*) for meditation. What is striking about these descriptions is how the behavioural and attitudinal dimensions of renunciation blend with the practical and social in the form of a simple and rarefied community that preserves forest meditative life.

1.2.2 Desirelessness

The Pāli term that is commonly used for renunciation is *nekkhamma*. Scholars who have analysed this term have suggested how it displays both literal and figurative meanings. Margaret Cone defines *nekkhamma* with both these imports:

departure from worldly life; the renunciation of worldly things and values;
whatever is the opposite of or rejection of all worldly, sensual pleasure and
desires.²⁷

K.R. Norman suggested a play on the meaning of *nekkhamma* based on two Sanskrit homonyms — one derived from *naiṣkramya*²⁸ ‘going out’ or ‘leaving behind’ and the other from *naiṣkāmya* ‘without desire’.²⁹ In a lengthy discussion, Genjun Sasaki has argued that it makes sense for *nekkhamma* to be derived from *naiṣkāmya* even though it would strictly correspond to a separate Pāli term, *nekkamma*. Sasaki also acknowledges that *nekkhamma* includes inherent notions of ‘abandoning’ as seen through word play present in the formula *kāmānaṃ etaṃ nissaraṇaṃ yad idaṃ nekkhammaṃ* (‘this is the escape from desire, namely *nekkhamma*’).³⁰ *Nekkhamma* might then be understood as ‘the giving up of (all) desires’.³¹ Rupert Gethin has argued for a more nuanced translation of *nekkhamma* as ‘desirelessness’. This is because *kāma* represents both ‘desire’ and ‘what is desirable’, i.e. sense pleasures. As such, *nekkhamma* must be understood with respect to both these imports: ‘*nekkhamma* is absence of desire because it turns away

²⁶ D III 195, 15-18. This description overlaps with that of the ideal *ārāma*, see below.

²⁷ DOP s.v. *nekkhamma*.

²⁸ The semantic derivation of *nekkhamma* has been the subject of some confusion, given that the PED regards it to be derived from the Sanskrit *naiṣkramya*, ‘leaving behind’. See Genjun Sasaki *Linguistic Approach to Buddhist Thought* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), p. 2.

²⁹ K. R. Norman, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism* (London: Pali Text Society, 2006), p. 102.

³⁰ My translation of It 61, 3-4. See Sasaki *Linguistic Approach to Buddhist Thought*, p. 6.

³¹ Sasaki *Linguistic Approach to Buddhist Thought*, pp. 4 and 6.

from desire, but it also turns away from what might be desired.’³² It is *nekkhamma* that maintains a ‘turning away’ from desire as a mental inclination in that desire is both affliction (*kilesa*) and object (*vatthu*). Both literal and figurative meanings are accommodated since one can turn away from sensory objects but if desire as mental affliction is not absent, then renunciation is incomplete. As ‘desirelessness’, the force of *nekkhamma* can therefore be understood as an attitude of continuous abandoning that is both psychological and behavioural.

A vivid example of the above principle is found in the *Samkappa Jātaka* which depicts how even the most confident and skilled meditators are susceptible to desire.³³ In this *jātaka*³⁴ the Bodhisatta³⁵ is born as the son of a rich Brahmin who abandons his home and family to live as an ascetic in the Himālaya. He later travels to Benares where his impeccable deportment and supernormal powers earn the praise of the king. But one day, and with just one glimpse of the queen, passion grips him ‘like a rising cobra spreading its hood’. All his ascetic powers soon vanish. Only after some time living alone in his hut does the ascetic regain his meditative powers and instead of accepting the king’s pleas to stay, he returns to the seclusion of the Himālaya where he lives for the remainder of his life.

In the story, desirelessness is not seen from the usual goal-based image of freedom from craving. It can be understood as a process of abandoning both mental states and restraint towards sense objects. As well as mental seclusion for unwholesome mind states, I suggest that the story also promotes physical seclusion from sense objects as a crucial step towards more spiritually efficacious forms of happiness.³⁶ In this connection,

³² Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p.192.

³³ J II 271-17.

³⁴ By *jātaka*, I refer to what is part of the Pāli *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*.

³⁵ A Bodhisatta is a future *buddha*, or ‘a being destined for awakening’. Bodhisatta is perhaps more accurately translated as ‘one intent on awakening’ given that *satta* is glossed as *lagga* (‘stuck’/ ‘attached to’) in Buddhaghosa’s exposition of the term in the commentary to the *Bhayabherava Sutta* at Ps I 113, 17-20.

³⁶ Physical seclusion and renunciation are closely linked in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* in which the renouncing king Janaka immediately withdraws to the roof terrace of his place to practice alone, J VI 45, 5-12. Appleton & Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories*, p. 100.

mental and physical seclusion are both associated in the texts with ‘delight in desirelessness’ (*nekkhamābhirata*).³⁷

1.2.3 Contentment and simplicity

Another pair of virtues closely linked with meditative life are contentment (*santuṭṭhi*) and simplicity, or ‘little wants’ (*appicchatā*). A *bhikkhu* is to be content with his robe and alms food and takes these wherever he goes just as a bird flies anywhere burdened only by its wings.³⁸ Collins suggested that a monk who is as ‘free as a bird’ with only these two dependencies is one who possesses virtues of self-sufficiency and friendship.³⁹ Whilst these are important qualities, it is also possible that the imagery conveys a slightly different meaning. I suggest that it is a *bhikkhu*’s contentment and simplicity that buoys his movement away from external dependencies and sources of satisfaction, and, orientates them inwardly towards non-worldly sources of delight. This is because contentment and simplicity are said to lead on to ‘solitude’ (*paviveka*) and non-association (*asamsagga*) as a causal sequence along with other factors leading towards wisdom.⁴⁰ Whilst *paviveka* usually implies meditative delight,⁴¹ *asamsagga* concerns guarding against relations as a source of enjoyment. This causal connection is noted elsewhere. Whereas a *bhikkhu* might be motivated to take up forest dwelling because it is praised by the Buddha, those who are esteemed in forest dwelling are ones whose contentedness and simplicity naturally incline them towards the inner peace of solitude (*paviveka*) and the destruction of mental afflictions.⁴²

We can also note the relationship between contentedness, simplicity and desirelessness in one’s approach to ‘resources’ (*nissayas*) which form the basis of renunciate lifestyle: begging for alms food, rag-robles, lodging at a ‘root of a tree’

³⁷ ‘The mind of a bhikkhu with taints destroyed...inclines to seclusion, it is withdrawn, delighting in renunciation, A IV 224, 22-24. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha. A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Bristol: PTS, 2012), p.1156. Also, ‘physical separation is for those with physical aloofness, for those with delight in renunciation’. Ud-a 231, 21-22, translation by Peter Masefield, *The Udāna Commentary by Dhammapāla Volumes I & II* (PTS: Oxford, 1995), p. 588.

³⁸ D I 71, 4-8.

³⁹ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 337-38.

⁴⁰ A V 130-31 and M I 145-46. *Paviveka* is discussed in the next chapter.

⁴¹ See next chapter.

⁴² A III 219.

(*rukhamūla*), and cattle-urine as medicine.⁴³ Using these, one ‘makes an effort for the rest of his/her life’.⁴⁴ Whilst the *vinaya* makes provision for less austere options to the basic resources,⁴⁵ there are, nevertheless, warnings about clinging to them. Among the future risks to spiritual growth identified in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* are warnings against pursuing better robes etc. Those who do, risk becoming enamoured by them and consequently, they ‘abandon lodgings in forests and remote places’ to take up residence in the village.⁴⁶

If modifications to ascetic practices are possible, wouldn’t they undermine the virtues one is trying to develop?⁴⁷ One valid response to this is to recognise that these modifications reflect the gradual nature of the Buddhist path and an acknowledgment of people at different stages and abilities. Yet we must also recognise that it is perfectly possible to live with the basic four *nissayas*. Although they clearly involve a greater austerity, effort and self-discipline, they are consonant with a more rigorous attitude to religious life retained as a valid path for some. Whilst this is the case, it is also true that clinging to ascetic practice is also detrimental and undermines the Buddha’s basic teaching of a middle way.⁴⁸ Although the vast majority of monastics adopt the less austere *nissayas*, the basic set can also be aspired to as an ideal and help orientate an attitude of desirelessness. Whilst better food and robes, palatable medicine and covered dwellings for lodgings may appear as risks to meditative life, they can act as aids to assuage the desire for even better resources when there is an attitude of non-attachment. The reference to remote and secluded places in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, above, is also a reminder of the link between physical withdrawal and the calming of desire and other affective mental states which are explored in more detail in Chapter

⁴³ A II 26-27.

⁴⁴ Vin I 58,₁₆: *yāvajīvaṃ ussāho karaṇīyo*. See also A II 26-27.

⁴⁵ Vin I 58, ₁₀₋₂₂.

⁴⁶ A III 108-10. In this *sutta*, the first three *nissayas* (robes, food and lodgings) are mentioned. Seeking finer versions of these, together with bonding with other monastics and monastery workers, make up five future risks.

⁴⁷ Several scholars have argued that the *nissaya* and *dhutaṅga* practices did not fit with the mood of the *vinaya* compilers whom they associate with settled monasticism. Exceptions to these practices have been described as an ‘emasculatation’ of an earlier forest ideal (Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, p.26) or that ascetic practices in general were a ‘dead letter’ from the perspective of the *vinaya* compilers, (Gregory Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), p.93.

⁴⁸ See the *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta*, explored below.

2. Through frequent meditative seclusion, a *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* is closer to transcending all attitudes towards basic resources as a practical reality of his/her desirelessness.

A similar relationship between simplicity, contentedness and meditative life can also be seen in the approach to dwelling places. In the *Upakkilesa-sutta*, the Buddha meets three *bhikkhus* living at the Eastern Bamboo Park who live in concord without dispute and who ‘blend like milk and water’.⁴⁹ When the Buddha enquires if the *bhikkhus* ‘abide diligent, ardent and resolute’ (qualities normally associated with meditative development), they reply that they do but the application of these qualities is foremost in their ability to conduct their practical affairs fairly, harmoniously and, for the most part, in silence.⁵⁰ Although individual and separate practice is not the main focus of *Upakkilesa-sutta*, there is a clear allusion to simplicity and contentedness and an appreciation of small meditative communities.⁵¹

In passages like this and the description of itinerant *bhikkhus* from the *vinaya* quote mentioned above, we can notice early Buddhist monastic life in terms of a simple, forest-based community. Their habitats (root of a tree, etc.) correspond to ideal locations for physical seclusion that overlap with repeated formula for meditation.⁵² When the Buddha was asked by the *setṭhi*,⁵³ Anāthapiṇḍika, if he could build a rains-residence in Sāvatti for him and his monks, the Buddha’s response betrays the importance of preserving meditative life in dwelling places: ‘But *Tathāgatas* delight in empty places’ (*suññāgāre abhīramanti*).⁵⁴ An empty place is taken to mean somewhere devoid of people, quiet and remote. In response, Anāthapiṇḍika acquired and donated Prince Jeta’s pleasure park (*ārāma*) which was:

neither too far nor too close to the town, allowing journeying to and from
[and] approachable by people, [yet] not beset by the crowd during the day,

⁴⁹ M III 156, 28-30.

⁵⁰ M III 157, 5-19.

⁵¹ Although the *bhikkhus* are not *arahats*, their meditative development is clearly discernible. But in a parallel passage appearing in the *Cūḷagosinga Sutta* (M I 205-11), the three *bhikkhus* are said to be *arahats*.

⁵² See next chapter.

⁵³ A rich merchant, perhaps equivalent to today’s property millionaire, or city banker. PED s.v. *setṭhi*.

⁵⁴ Vin II 158, 11-12. In the *Cullavagga* at Vin II 38, a park is also gifted by King Bimbisāra of Magadha to the Buddha and his monks.

not too noisy in the night, [where there is] little talk, [with] an atmosphere of abandonment, remote from people, suitable for retreat.⁵⁵

It seems reasonable to treat the *ārāma* at Jeta's Grove as a template for subsequent monastic abodes at the time. Nevertheless, it clearly expresses an encompassing vision of Buddhist monasticism.⁵⁶ The *ārāma* appears as a contained setting that places value on both settled life along with contact with laypeople and forest withdrawal. It should also be noted that the Buddha gave many teachings to *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs* and laypeople at *ārāmas*.⁵⁷ Yet the overlap with physical seclusion suggests how quiet meditative life away from the masses is retained as the organising principle to the ideal dwelling place.⁵⁸ A *bhikkhu* must show humility and contentment towards any kind of dwelling place without agitation or infatuation.⁵⁹ However, as is the case of other resources, a desire for good lodgings (*senāsane kalyāṇakāmā*)⁶⁰ has bad consequences in relation to the development of meditative practice. Again, the ideal *ārāma* as a modification of a more basic approach, maintains an encompassing vision of renunciation whilst preserving principles of non-attachment and letting-go conducive with meditation. With deeper practice, as we shall see, a *bhikkhu* develops greater wisdom and self-reliance.

To sum up, the practical reality of going forth involves both an 'outer withdrawal' from society as well as an 'inner withdrawal' consonant with attitudes of 'letting go' of all forms of *dukkha*. As a specific object that is abandoned, the home could be said to also metonymically evoke all that represents the production and reproduction of conventional society. Similarly, a 'homeless' renouncer maintains both practical and

⁵⁵ My translation of Vin II 158, 27-30: *n' eva avidūre na accāsanne gamanāgamasampannaṃ atthikānaṃ-atthikānaṃ manussānaṃ abhikkamanīyaṃ, divā appākiṇṇaṃ rattiṃ appasaddaṃ appanigghosaṃ vijanavātaṃ manussarāhaseyyakaṃ paṭisallānasāruppan ti*. See also Vin I 38-39.

⁵⁶ The *ārāma* described here partly corresponds with the five-fold qualities (*aṅga*) for suitable lodgings listed in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*: [1] neither too far or too close (to alms gathering) and allowing a means to go and return from there, [2] not disturbed by people by day and quiet in the night, [3] relatively free of snakes, mosquitoes etc and not too exposed to the elements, [4] where alms, lodgings, medicines, robes can be obtained, [5] access to elder, more learned monastics, A V 15-16.

⁵⁷ E.g. The *Cūladukkhandha-sutta* at Nigrodhārāma (M I 91-95), the *Tipallatthamiga Jātaka* (J I 160-64) at Badarikārāma. For the several *suttas* preached at Ghositārāma see DPPN.

⁵⁸ Note that at D III 195, 15-18, *bhikkhus* are said to be living in 'deep places in the woods' (*vanapattha*) that overlap with the *ārāma* description above being 'not too noisy in the night, with little talk, an atmosphere of abandonment, remote from people, suitable for retreat'.

⁵⁹ A II 28, 6-14.

⁶⁰ A III 109, 12.

psychological dimensions of religious life. I have focussed on desirelessness, simplicity and contentment as renunciate ideals. Whilst these qualities maintain an attitude of ‘letting go’, modifications to their adoption recognise a pragmatism towards living the religious life. What I’d like to highlight is that they are also framed by a practical orientation towards mental cultivation predicated on withdrawal for meditation. The notions of both an individual path and a community are no better reflected than in the ideal *ārāma* which preserves both the practice of meditative seclusion and a *bhikkhu*’s interdependency with society at large.

1.2.4 Further attitudes to renunciation

Although there is a sense of pragmatism towards individual development, the *nikāyas* still stress an energetic determination and a commitment to meditation. The central concern of the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* is: why renounce only to achieve partial fruits in religious life?⁶¹ Elsewhere, superior assemblies of renouncers comprise those who do not seek out luxuries, do not backslide (to household life), who are exemplars in seclusion and who arouse their energy for unattained spiritual rewards.⁶²

Yet, in keeping with its multiple perspectives, the Pāli texts also present different attitudes to renunciation. The advantage of youth in the demanding rigours of ascetic life is made clear in the *nikāyas*. Amongst the future risks to a *bhikkhu*’s spiritual growth, mentioned above, is a future state of old age.⁶³ Accordingly, renunciation is typically enjoined with some urgency most notably in the hagiography of the Buddha where Gotama is described as having gone forth at the ‘prime of his life’.⁶⁴ Renunciation late in life, even appears to be discouraged when two elderly Brahmins are told by the Buddha that their best option is to make merit.⁶⁵ Elsewhere, it is rare to find the required qualities of one who has renounced in old age.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, such exceptions that

⁶¹ D I 47-86.

⁶² A III 71, 10-21.

⁶³ ‘But when one has become old, overcome with old age, it is not easy to attend to the Buddha’s teaching, it is not easy to resort to forests, places deep in the woods and remote dwelling places.’ My translation of A III 103, 8-11: *jīṇṇena kho pana jarāya abhibhūtena na sukaraṃ buddhānaṃ sāsanaṃ manasikātum, na sukarāni araññavanapatthāni pantāni senāsanāni paṭisevitum.*

⁶⁴ *paṭhamena vayasā*; D I 115, 17.

⁶⁵ A I 155, 23-26.

⁶⁶ A III 78-79.

describe those who are successful in renunciation in old age⁶⁷ open up alternative perspectives towards renunciation and religious duty in worldly life.

A contrast in the religious duty of a person at a time when the teaching of the Buddha's *Dhamma* is absent and the *bhikkhu/bhikkhuni* of the *nikāyas* is notable in two 'good practices' (*kalyāṇa vaṭṭa*) found in the *Makhādeva-sutta*.⁶⁸ The first refers to the renunciation of a righteous king named Nimi of Videha who lives by the *Dhamma* but renounces late in life after the sight of grey hair.⁶⁹ The second 'good practice' is the renunciate life of a *bhikkhu* following the path of the Buddha leading to *nibbāna*. Naomi Appleton has shown how Nimi's example legitimises religious life of the householder and offers 'multiple perspectives on renunciation'.⁷⁰ As such, it contrasts with the *Temiya Jātaka* in which the Bodhisatta is born as a prince who feigns being dumb and crippled to avoid kingship and renounces as a youth.⁷¹ Makhādeva's (and Nimi's) 'good practice', being the *brahmavihāras*,⁷² leads to rebirth in heaven (*brahmaloka*), consistent with the best possible religious goal in other *jātaka* stories. The *sutta* then clearly presents a lifelong commitment to renunciation as the more relevant course for the follower of the Buddha. Nevertheless, the practice of a moral worldly life followed by renunciation in old age is also legitimate.

Appleton notes that the *Makhādeva-sutta* is part of a tapestry of stories that offer narrative advantages to a 'world-embracing audience' by both legitimising renunciation after fathering sons and by contrasting worldly life with renunciation.⁷³ We might conclude that, on one hand, the story acknowledges that society, good or bad, cannot

⁶⁷ Dhammasavapitu is said to have attained arahatship after going forth at the age of 120 years, Th 108.

⁶⁸ M II 74-83 and which has parallels in the *Makhādeva Jātaka* (J VI 30-68) and the *Nemi-jātaka* (J VI 95-129).

⁶⁹ King Nimi is born into a line of descendants of a former king called Makhādeva who is also the Bodhisatta. The lineage is eventually broken by King Nimi's son, the last of a line of 84,000 Videhan kings who follow the practice of royal renunciation.

⁷⁰ Naomi Appleton, *Shared Characters in Jain, Buddhist and Hindu Narrative: Gods, Kings and Other Heroes* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), p. 140. Appleton has studied how motifs that connect renouncing kings across Buddhist, Jain and Hindu narratives serve the respective *dharma*s of these religions.

⁷¹ J IV 25, ³¹⁻³²: 'The young should follow the holy life. The young should be religious, for the renunciation of the young should be praised by the sages'. Translation by Appleton and Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories*, p. 76.

⁷² Loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic-joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*), see below.

⁷³ Appleton, *Shared Characters*, p. 154.

exist without reproduction⁷⁴ and that it is better to renounce late in life than not at all. On the other, it could also serve to critique the Vedic obligation of begetting sons and being ‘reborn’ through them and, that a householder is obliged by the ‘debt’ of offspring.⁷⁵ Hence, it seems to me that the story better serves as a Buddhist reminder that at a time when no *buddhas* exist, there is a lacuna in the knowledge of the highest spiritual goal that surpasses rebirth in the *brahmaloka*. As a subtle critique of kingship, kings bound by their *kamma* to produce heirs will always be subordinate to the renouncer who fully abandons all enjoyments under a *buddha*’s dispensation.

Motifs of renunciation late in life can also be found in the *Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta* (CVS),⁷⁶ but where the moral consequences of kingly rule are seen to be fragile. In this *sutta*, another monarch, Daḷhanemi, follows the tradition of the *cakkavattin* — a ‘wheel turning-king’ and rules righteously but later renounces, leaving his son to take on the mantle. Collins’ in-depth exposition of the CVS highlights the vicissitudes of society in terms of the good and bad deeds of a *cakkavattin*.⁷⁷ Good social conditions are reliant on the *cakkavattin* carrying out his righteous duty whereby society reaches its zenith as a kind of ‘utopia’. When he fails, human health and longevity declines and society reaches a nadir.

1.2.5 The renouncer and ‘ideal society’

Considering narratives like the CVS, Collins made several interesting and important claims about Buddhism and society. Whilst the CVS clearly presents a renouncer’s view of the absence and presence of *buddhas* in the world over the course of time, the monastic community is not generally conceived as the paradigm for utopic society.⁷⁸ And, although Pāli literature presents no formal view of an ideal society, the plural setting of the CVS is, Collins argued, the closest vision of social utopia in the Pāli imaginaire.⁷⁹ As well as

⁷⁴ As already mentioned, lust (*rāga*) is considered a lesser fault but takes longer to overcome fully, A I 200, 1-2. The commentary explains how marriage is socially accepted with lesser karmic consequences. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, p. 1657, n. 471.

⁷⁵ The *Mahābhārata* has numerous stories which depict celibate ascetics being excluded from heaven because they did not father heirs. See Patrick Olivelle, *Ascetics and Brahmins. Studies in Ideologies and Institutions* (London: Anthem, 2011), pp. 36-37.

⁷⁶ D III 58-79.

⁷⁷ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 482-93.

⁷⁸ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 447-48.

⁷⁹ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 562.

representing the *summa felicitatum* of the Pāli imaginaire,⁸⁰ Collins argued that the *Vessantara Jātaka*⁸¹ also subtly blends ascetic motifs with an ideal vision of ordinary communal life.⁸² We can see how the *CVS* works in the opposite way by blending perspectives from the ordinary, temporal domain with ascetic ideals aimed at transcending these. At the dénouement of the *CVS*, five qualities earlier presented as worldly fortunes are reinterpreted as renunciate virtues.⁸³ Another way is how the *CVS* blurs the distinction between *puñña* (meritorious/good) and *kusala* (skilful/wholesome).⁸⁴ Collins, following P. D. Premasiri,⁸⁵ illustrates *puñña* and *kusala* as two poles whose axes overlap but are not the same.⁸⁶ Whilst *puñña* and its opposite state, *pāpa*, are phenomena of rebirth, *kusala* has a wider scope in encompassing *puñña* but is also specifically related to the eradication of afflictions whereby wholesome mental states and action occur without attachment. As Collins argued, the ambiguity of *kusala/puñña* can be juxtaposed with the ‘temporal felicities’ of society whilst distinguishing renunciate life as that which leads to the ‘ultimate felicity’ of *nibbāna*.

From the above, it may be possible to sketch out an ideal view of society, albeit a discursive one. Collins and Appleton have identified how certain narratives acknowledge ideas and practices of asceticism as well as ordinary productive and reproductive society. The place of non-renouncers is vividly illustrated in our opening story which depicts how villagers can attain stages of sanctity and have great value to renouncers both materially

⁸⁰ That is, it encompasses all categories of Buddhist happiness, Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 548-54.

⁸¹ Considered by the tradition to be the last human birth of the Bodhisatta as Prince Vessantara, who gradually gives away various items in his possession in the perfection of generosity. He first gives away the royal elephant, all his wealth, and then on the way to the forest after being banished from the kingdom with his wife and children, he gives away his horses and then his chariot. It is however, the dramatic and emotional imagery stirred by the Bodhisatta’s giving up of his children that is the most powerful act of generosity in this story. J VI 479-593.

⁸² Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 501.

⁸³ ‘In your field(s) of movement, monks, keep to your own customary terrain. When [you do this] your vitality and beauty will increase, as will your happiness, enjoyment and strength.’ D III 77,15-19. Translation by Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 613, (see also pp. 494-45).

⁸⁴ D III 58, 20-22: ‘it is by acquiring *kusala dhammas*, monks, that this *puñña* increases’.

⁸⁵ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 154 and Premasiri, P. D., ‘Interpretation of Two Principal Ethical Terms in Early Buddhism,’ *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, 2 No. 1, (1976), 63-74.

⁸⁶ *Puñña* as a meritorious act has a kammic result, but *kusala* need not have. Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 154.

and spiritually.⁸⁷ In addition, the texts appear to be pragmatic towards ascetic life by recognising beings at different stages of the path. Nevertheless, it is renunciation under the Buddha's teaching along with its ideals of youth, seclusion and meditative exertion that is distinguished. These ideals, together with the recognition of quiet and relatively secluded places⁸⁸ speak of the renouncer's 'lonely' path. This 'lonely' or 'narrow path' (*ekāyana magga*)⁸⁹ is imagined in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* as the path to arahantship which is to be travelled by oneself.⁹⁰ As we shall discuss presently, narrative representations of this 'lonely path' are scattered throughout Pāli literature. In the CVS, it is illustrated in relation to another *cakkavattin*, Saṅkha. Saṅkha rules righteously, installs a moral society together with collective happiness but renounces at the time of Metteyya Buddha to live 'alone and withdrawn' to realise the personal happiness of *nibbāna*.⁹¹

In sum, the texts seem to be making a pragmatic point about renunciate life by firstly illustrating how renouncers are not disenfranchised from society and secondly by accommodating persons at different stages and capabilities. If a vision of an 'ideal society' is possible to conceive, it is one in which not everyone is a monk or nun. Nevertheless, opportunities for renunciation and the values of renouncers are supported and nurtured. This society, therefore, accommodates the basic premise that whilst an ordinary *bhikkhu* is part of society, his ultimate happiness is personal and not a social kind. But, how do ostensibly opposing notions of separate practice and 'society' play out in the texts? To address this question, I will turn to examining some example from Pāli literature more closely.

⁸⁷ Another prominent example of a spiritually advanced householder is Ugga who is a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). Ugga takes the five precepts and parts from his four wives. He shares his wealth with virtuous people. He listens to the *Dhamma* and even teaches it to *bhikkhus* if they are not teaching him. A IV 210-21.

⁸⁸ The motif of physical seclusion and renouncing monarchs is also seen in the *Mahāsudassana-sutta* in which the titular king withdraws after installing a pleasure palace for all his subjects to enjoy (M II 169-99).

⁸⁹ M I 75, 1.

⁹⁰ Rupert Gettin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), p. 63.

⁹¹ D III 76-77.

1.3 Self-reliance and togetherness

In the following, I will discuss further how renunciate life is conceived as both communal and separate. I will first discuss the extent to which physical seclusion is germane to Buddhist monasticism by exploring certain archetypes. I will argue that whilst group practice and learning maintain relations with society and internal social cohesion, they crucially allow an individual to care for himself when balanced by other renunciate qualities and spiritually efficacious emotions. Self-reliant and less dependent on his group for his training, the *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* makes progress on his/her individual path to *nibbāna*.

1.3.1 Archetypes of renunciate life

One way that the *nikāyas* underscore the principle of physical withdrawal is in the stories of its religious victors whose act of going forth from ordinary society is predicated on a pre-realisation. An important motif of future *buddhas* is the seeing of ‘four sights’ and subsequent insight into old age, sickness, death and renunciate life. These four crucial interventions⁹² in a Bodhisatta’s life appear in the story of the past *buddha* Vipassī.⁹³ When prince Vipassī renounces his kingdom and leaves the palace, he is followed by a great crowd from the city who all renounce in the same way. For Vipassī, separation from even fellow renouncers is a necessary step towards his subsequent self-awakening, alone in seclusion: ‘It is not appropriate for me that I live hemmed in. Why don’t I live alone, withdrawn from the crowd’?⁹⁴ Elsewhere, in the *Janaka Jātaka*,⁹⁵ the Bodhisatta, as King

⁹² Although a short hagiography of Siddhattha Gotama as a Bodhisatta appears at A I 145-46, the ‘four sights’ are not included there nor are they included in any other legendary account of the Gotama Buddha’s life in the Pāli Canon. However, all ‘four ‘sights’ are traceable in the description of the two kinds of search described in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*, which includes a short flashback to the Buddha’s life as a Bodhisatta. The first three ‘sights’ are clear in the ‘ignoble search’. Here one who is subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement seeks what is also subject to birth...defilement. The fourth ‘sight’ is inherent in the principle of the ‘noble search’ which leads to escape from suffering — *nibbāna*, and which the Bodhisatta seeks out. Here, one, who despite being subject to birth...defilement, seeks out what is NOT subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement (M I 161- 63). Through this search we catch ‘sight’ of the religious life of a *samaṇa*.

⁹³ The *Mahāpādāna-sutta*, D II 1-54. See D II 22-29 for the ‘four sights’.

⁹⁴ My translation of D II 30, 16-18; *na kho me taṃ patirūpaṃ yo ‘haṃ ākiñño viharāmi. yaṃ nūnāhaṃ eko gaṇasmā vūpakaṭṭho vihareyyan ti.*

⁹⁵ J VI 30-68.

Janaka, renounces his kingdom after acquiring a sense of urgency.⁹⁶ But he too is followed out of the royal city by the queen, Sīvalī, and others. Even despite literally drawing a line in the ground to separate himself from them, the crowd pursue him relentlessly. Only due to his great resolve to renounce is Janaka able to finally leave the crowd behind at the edge of the forest, reflecting: ‘Like a *muñja* reed pulled out, I will live alone, Sīvalī’.⁹⁷ A story that contrasts with the *Samkappa Jātaka*, mentioned earlier, is the *Kaṇha Jātaka*.⁹⁸ Here, the Bodhisatta’s renunciation is triggered by a reflection on the illusory nature of wealth. He lives alone as an ascetic by a single tree, outstanding in his simplicity (*parama-appiccha*) and in the highest state of contentment (*parama-santuṭṭha*). When Sakka, Lord of Tāvātimsa heaven, grants him several favours, he reaffirms his commitment to live alone (*ekavihārī*) without anger, hatred, greed or affection.⁹⁹

Similar patterns appear in poems of the early *arahats*. A good example is Tālapuṭa whose fifty verses appear in the *Theragāthā* of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* — possibly the canon’s most consistent source of praise of solitude. From Tālapuṭa’s verses we can trace a process of aspiration, self-effort and realisation.¹⁰⁰ Even prior to going forth, he already possesses a level of insight into the cause of his suffering:

When, O when shall I live all alone
in mountain caves, unmated with desire,
clear seeing as unstable all that comes to be?
This wish of mine, when indeed will it be? ¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Janaka sees both a full mango tree and a bare one. He picks a fruit from the fruiting tree only to see it later stripped of all its fruit and left broken by his retinue. He then reflects: ‘It is those with belongings, rather than those without, that have fear. I will stop being like a fruiting tree and become like the fruitless tree’. *sakiñcanass’ eva bhayaṃ nākiñcanassa, ahaṃ phalarukkho viya ahutvā nipphalarukkhasadiso bhavissāmi*. J VI 45, 3-4. Translation by Appleton and Shaw, *Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha*, p. 100.

⁹⁷ J VI 67, 24. Translation by Appleton, and Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories*, p. 115.

⁹⁸ J IV 6-14.

⁹⁹ Ja IV 10, 16-18; *kodha, dosa, lobha and sneha*.

¹⁰⁰ See Bhikkhu Khantipālo, *Forest Meditations; The Verses of the Arahant Tālapuṭa Thera* (Kandy: BPS Wheel Publication, 1983).

¹⁰¹ Th 1091:

*kadā nu’haṃ pabbatakandarāsu ekākiyo addutiyo vihassaṃ
aniccato sabbabhavaṃ vipassaṃ, taṃ me idaṃ taṃ nu kadā bhavissati.*
Translation by Khantipālo, *Forest Meditations*, p. 6.

Taḷaputa's verses reveal how his subsequent forest practice is challenging (v. 1097) but nevertheless, how nature and landscape lead to insight (v. 1101), collectedness (v.1103) and, particularly, meditative joy (vv. 1133, 1135 and 1144). These verses provide a glimpse into how early Buddhist poets envisaged the minds of those who renounced in the Buddha's footsteps. In particular, they illustrate Taḷaputa's awareness, prior to his renunciation, of the connection between realising *Dhamma* and a skilful desire to practice alone relying on his own efforts.

For the above exemplars, physical separation is not merely a by-product of homeless life but part of an inclination towards easing suffering. Separate practice, away from others, is an intuitive and appropriate continuation of going forth maintained persistently as a practical response to that impulse.

From the above, forest withdrawal appears as a natural part of the transformation towards what Wijayaratna and others call 'true' or 'ideal' solitude. However, the texts also recognise that persistent forest withdrawal is not suitable for all. A good example is the Buddha's attendant, Meghiya,¹⁰² who practices alone in a delightful mango grove, despite the Buddha's advice against doing so. Meghiya soon finds himself gripped by unwholesome thoughts so the Buddha teaches him five things that lead to liberation of mind (*cetovimutti*). These are good companionship, virtue and talks on renunciate values. Although the passage indicates ethical social relations as a valid basis for liberating insight, Meghiya must still cultivate his mind.¹⁰³ Elsewhere, the Buddha warns Upāli that someone who takes to the forest without mastering his concentration is like a cat or hare who enters a deep lake normally enjoyed by bull elephants.¹⁰⁴ Unlike those elephants who gain a firm footing in the lake, the cat and hare either get washed away or sink to the bottom.¹⁰⁵ The Buddha goes on to teach Upāli the gradual path. At the end of this *sutta*, Upāli is instructed to live with his group.

According to the commentary of the above *sutta*, the Buddha knows that Upāli is destined to be the foremost in monastic discipline (*vinaya*). If he chooses the forest, he would achieve the 'task of forest-dwelling' (*vāsadhura*) not the 'task of learning'

¹⁰² *Meghiya-sutta*, A IV 354-58.

¹⁰³ Although wise companionship leads to the complete destruction of suffering (A IV 358, 10-12), he must also practice perception of the un-lovely aspects of the body, loving-kindness, mindfulness of breathing, perception of impermanence.

¹⁰⁴ A V 201-10.

¹⁰⁵ A V 202-03.

(*ganthadura*). Living in the midst of the *Saṅgha*, he fulfils both and will master the *vinaya*.¹⁰⁶ The *sutta* appears to reinforce the argument of some that forest withdrawal is not essential for awakening.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the commentary appears to give special dispensation to the settled life in the monastery as fulfilling both vocations of learning and meditation since Upāli becomes an *arahat* in his group. In doing so, the commentary appears to support what Reginald Ray describes as the deliberate ‘domestication’ of meditation by the later commentarial tradition.¹⁰⁸

However, the commentary acknowledges that forest-dwelling is still an option for Upāli.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the *sutta* goes on to describe in depth the role of physical seclusion in the gradual path.¹¹⁰ Through use of a vivid simile, the passage can be included as another example of a pragmatic view on renunciate life amongst community. It seems to me, however, that Upāli, as master of *vinaya* matters, is presented as an example of exceptions to a more generic principle. I suggest that the *sutta* appears for others as an instruction for them to be more like ‘elephants’ than as ‘cats’ or ‘hares’.¹¹¹ We, therefore, need not conclude that forest meditation is only efficacious for a select few and that others should, instead, settle in the monastery devoting themselves to study.

As Gethin has shown, Buddhist monasticism could be seen in terms of a tension between study and practice and how this distinction corresponds to that between scholarly ‘town dwelling’ and meditating ‘forest-dwelling’ *bhikkhus*.¹¹² Rather than polarities, Gethin posits these as ideals between which a *bhikkhu* could ‘move’. In this way, his life is a balance between asceticism and obligations that forge wholesome

¹⁰⁶ See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, n. 2137, pp. 1851-52.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, p. 116.

¹⁰⁸ Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, pp. 79-104.

¹⁰⁹ The commentary does not categorically suggest that Upāli was unsuitable for forest life, only that it will lead to limited results because of his strengths in *vinaya* matters: ‘If he lives in the forest, he will fulfil only the task of practice, not the task of learning. But if he lives in the midst of the *Saṅgha*, he will fulfil the two tasks, attain arahatship, and become the foremost expert in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.’ Mp V 59-60: *araññasenāsane vasato kirassa vāsadhurameva pūrisati, na ganthadhuraṃ. saṅghamajjhe vasanto pana dve dhurāni pūretvā arahattaṃ pāpuṇissati, vinayapiṭake ca pāmokkho bhavissati*. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, p. 1852, n. 2137.

¹¹⁰ In the next chapter, I will explore this *sutta* and other path schema in relation to physical and mental seclusions.

¹¹¹ See Chapter 5 for more detail on the elephant as metaphor or a particularly independent, meditating approach to monastic life.

¹¹² Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, pp. 38 and 104-05.

relationships.¹¹³ How these ideals appear without tension is no better illustrated than in Mahācunda’s verses from the *Theragāthā*:

Through desire to learn, learning increases;
Learning is an increaser of wisdom;
By wisdom one knows the goal;
The goal, when known, brings happiness.¹¹⁴

One should make use of remote lodgings; one should
practise release from fetters. If one does not gain contentment
there, one should dwell in the Order with guarded self, possessed
of mindfulness.¹¹⁵

Reading these verses descriptively, Ray acknowledges that whilst they might represent ‘contemporaneous’ lifestyles, he nevertheless suggests that they refer to ‘options’ with forest dwelling as the more ‘superior’.¹¹⁶ In his focused study, discussed in the Introduction chapter, Lance Cousins concluded that there is no real tension between scholars and meditators. The question of whether study in the group is more important than individual meditation or vice versa is answered by seeing how meditation is preserved as a value that is part of both.¹¹⁷ Mahācunda himself seems to be an exemplar of the value of both practice and learning with each appearing in the continuum of his religious life.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, pp. 106-07.

¹¹⁴ Th 141-42:

*sussūsā sutavaḍḍhanī. sutam paññāya vaḍḍhanam.
paññāya attham jānāti. nāto attho sukhāvaho. ||*

Translation adapted from K. R. Norman, *The Elders’ Verses* (London: Pali Text Society, 2007), p. 19

¹¹⁵ Th 142:

*sevetha pantāni senāsanāni. careyya saṃyojanavippamokkham.
aa ce ratim nādhigaccheyya tatha, saṅghe vase rakkhitatto
satīmā ti ||*

Translation adapted from Norman, *Elders’ Verses*, p. 19

¹¹⁶ Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, p. 96.

¹¹⁷ Like Gethin, Cousins perceived the two approaches as ‘ideals’ and any tendency by scholars to use these *suttas* to project a tension as ‘overly literal’. Cousins, *Scholar Monks and Meditator Monks*, pp. 40 and 44.

¹¹⁸ Another high-profile monk who appears to be characterised by both asceticism and community is Anuruddha, who is best known for his mastery of the ‘divine eye’ (*dibbacakkhu*). Nyanaponika Thera and Hellmuth Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha – Their Lives, Their Works, Their Legacy* (Somerville: Wisdom, 2003), p. 195.

For forest meditators, like Taḷapuṭa, the aspiration to renounce leads ineluctably to the forest and intuitively away from the group. Nevertheless, we cannot assume that such types were a majority since forest withdrawal is often mentioned alongside warnings and dangers.¹¹⁹ For both Meghiya and Upāli, life in the group is ultimately fruitful. The path to wisdom is supported by, *inter alia*, wholesome companionship, efficacious talks and learning. The accommodation of ascetic types as well as *bhikkhus* bent on learning, settled amongst religious companions is a further example of a more expansive approach to renunciate life. Religious tasks and duty associated with the group need not contrast with or be unrelated to separate individual practice. Mahācunda's verses tells us that learning, privately or in the group, and forest withdrawal need not be seen as contrasting but are mutually supporting. His example appears to best represent how the values of both group and individual practice are preserved in a *bhikkhu's* life without tension.

In the next section, I intend to examine this point further by discussing how living within a group promotes both fraternity and individual spiritual development. Whilst the task of learning can be conventionally conceived as a group practice, it also encourages inward reflection and as such, gradually strengthens self-reliance and independence from the group. Despite the support of his fellows, the path of a Buddhist renouncer can be conceived more vividly as 'lonely' or 'narrow'.

1.3.2 The social sphere

It is worthwhile pausing at this point, to clarify what I refer to as group or community in the discussions that follow. What I mean by 'group' is a corpus of mainly monastic people associated by regular contact in an *ārāma* or other monastic dwelling.¹²⁰ The 'group' overlaps with the religious Order or *Saṅgha* as a totality, which includes those who may or may not be living together at one time but with whom a *bhikkhu* forms a wider religious community.¹²¹ The 'group' is then a subset of the *Saṅgha* who happen to

¹¹⁹ Clearly seen in the *Bhayabherava-sutta*, M I 16-24.

¹²⁰ More specifically monks, sometimes nuns and male and female lay followers (*upāsakas* and *upāsikās*). The canon refers to these groups of people as the four 'assemblies' (*catu parisā*), e.g. Ja I 148, 5-6. But the group I refer to might also include novices (*sāmaṇeras* and *sāmaṇerīs*).

¹²¹ The *Saṅgha* in totality, comprising a community of ordained monks and nuns including those present and absent is called the 'Saṅgha of the four directions', *cātuddisassa saṅgha*, Vin II 147, 26-27. This overlaps with what Richard Gombrich calls, the 'conventional Saṅgha' but

be collocated or who meet regularly. The monastic *Saṅgha* is also to be distinguished from the ‘noble Saṅgha’ as refuge (*saraṇa*). The noble *Saṅgha* is not determined by ordination and is more encompassing in that it includes laypeople attained to sanctity.¹²² The noble *Saṅgha* comprising the Buddha, *arahats* and enlightened beings including those in other realms, are beyond time, place and conventions.

The religious justification of the group is no better exemplified than by *vinayakammas*¹²³ that govern legal proceedings. A case in point is the monthly *pavāraṇā* ceremony which all Buddhist monastics are enjoined to participate in. The *pavāraṇā* is the occasion for monastics to request admonishment of any misdemeanours. According to the *vinaya*, the procedure was introduced because a small group of *bhikkhus* preferred to remain ‘silent’ rather than openly reflect on their behaviour during the rains retreat.¹²⁴ Ray takes this episode to argue that the *pavāraṇā* is evidence of how meditation (as in ‘silence’) is devalued in favour of the practices of settled monasticism.¹²⁵ However, Ray appears to have confused noble silence, as in the practice of *jhāna*, with the refusal to talk or ‘acting dumb’ (*mūgavatta*).¹²⁶ The latter was deemed inappropriate as conflict and digression are best treated in the open. However, Ray’s argument, if problematic, does highlight an interesting point, namely how *vinayakammas* and other monastic rules introduce a level of organisational social structure into the renouncer community.

What is perhaps more evident through the *pavāraṇā* is how privacy is not a right for any monastic. Any strong desire to remain isolated from the group is eased by both personal and group ethic — a principal method of connecting the two is communal ‘confession’ (*āpatti desanā*). What this suggests is that whilst communal acts maintain

separate from the ‘ideal Saṅgha’ which includes those attained to sanctity. *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

¹²² Laymen and lay women as well as monks and nuns who are practice well and accomplished in wisdom are said to ‘illuminate’ the *Saṅgha*, A II 8-9.

¹²³ This is a later term introduced by the fifth century CE commentator, Buddhadata, to cover monastic legal procedures found in the canonical *vinaya*. See Oskar von Hinüber, *Handbook of Pāli*, p. 155.

¹²⁴ Vin I 159.

¹²⁵ ‘Such a development suggests a communal context in which the practice of silence was no longer felt to be important and was, in fact, seen as in some way counterproductive to the community’s larger aims.’ Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, p. 28.

¹²⁶ Vin I 159, 18. The Buddha likened the monks to heretics and initiated the *pavāraṇā* as a rule whilst ‘acting dumb’ was made an offence.

an individual's moral obligations, he/she is neither lonely nor made anonymous amongst their fellows in religious life.

According to the *nikāyas*, a *bhikkhu* is enjoined to be guarded in his relations and to maintain various virtues that strengthen harmony within the group in general. A basic premise is that those who are morally corrupt and disingenuous in their religious life are to be avoided whilst the virtuous are to be followed and associated with.¹²⁷ The *nikāyas* list four means to foster togetherness (*saṅgaha*),¹²⁸ the six¹²⁹ and ten¹³⁰ principles of cordiality (*dhamma sārāṇīyā*) — based on personal discipline, trust in the teachings, and interpersonal and communal skills — and seven principles for non-decline (of cohesion) in the monastic community.¹³¹ The importance of personal and social responsibility is reflected in how a *bhikkhu*'s virtue acknowledges individual conscience or self-respect (*hiri*) as well as others' opinions (*ottappa*).¹³² Whilst *hiri* has a more personal or intuitive sense of moral integrity, *ottappa* has an external orientation in that it includes the reproach of others in the concern for the consequences of wrongdoing.¹³³

Wider society supports a *bhikkhu* both materially and spiritually. Through gift giving (typically alms food), the householder performs a positive karmic act, *puññā*, with its potential reward of a better future birth. In fulfilling this obligation, monastics, as the 'field of merit' (*puññakkhetta*),¹³⁴ have a greater personal responsibility by giving the gift of *Dhamma* in return.¹³⁵ They typically preach the *Dhamma* but their sharing of gratitude and appreciation (*anumodanā*) widens the benefits of merit to all beings.¹³⁶ Here, both

¹²⁷ A III 126-27. Similarly, at S II 158, 11-14: the good unite and blend like milk with milk, oil with oil, etc.

¹²⁸ Generosity, kind speech, beneficent action and impartiality A II 32, 16-19.

¹²⁹ Loving-kindness (*mettā*) that is both open and private and acted through body, speech and mind. A III 289-90.

¹³⁰ Virtue based on *pātimokkha* (training rules), learning and remembering the teachings, having good friends, patience, skills and diligence in monastic duties, love of *Dhamma*, exertion to abandon the unwholesome and to cultivate the wholesome, contentedness, mindfulness and wisdom. A V 88-92.

¹³¹ A IV 21-22.

¹³² M I 271, 15-17. In this *sutta*, the Buddha clarifies that a *bhikkhu* is a *samaṇa* having quietened down harmful mental states and is a *brahmin* having eradicated these, M I 280, 13-18.

¹³³ Vism 464-65.

¹³⁴ In that their virtue and discipline make them the best recipient of the householder's generosity (*dāna*); usually alms and offerings.

¹³⁵ Which 'excels all gifts', Dh 354.

¹³⁶ See Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, p. 102.

parties rejoice in the good acts and selflessly share the karmic rewards.¹³⁷ In relation to society at large, a *bhikkhu* is a willing participant in social acts. For him, social participation must be balanced by a personal ethic based upon, *inter alia*, desirelessness and non-attachment.¹³⁸

The practice of befriending others as much as oneself is a powerful tool for both group and solitary living. Whilst cultivating the path requires the perfection of ‘self’ (*attasampadā*),¹³⁹ a *bhikkhu* is reminded to review both his own success (*attasampatti*) as well as the success of others (*parasampatti*).¹⁴⁰ A harmonious group is an occasion for practising sympathetic joy (*muditā*) that leads to meditative calm.¹⁴¹ Equanimity (*upekkhā*) is to be developed towards those who easily display anger.¹⁴² By helping others and showing gratitude, one practises selflessness.¹⁴³ Sympathetic joy and equanimity, together with loving-kindness and compassion comprise the four ‘divine abodes’ (*brahmavihāras*). The *brahmavihāras* are to be practised both inwardly as a powerful purifying meditation and outwardly to ‘break down barriers’ between oneself and others.¹⁴⁴ The importance of loving-kindness practised ‘openly and privately’ is singled out as part of six principles of cordiality (see above). Outward affection towards others engenders benevolence and when practised openly becomes a recognisable act of friendship and non-hatred. Practised inwardly, loving-kindness is a basis for successful

¹³⁷ Reginald Ray appears to echo Weber’s characterisation of the layperson’s practice (see above footnote), *Buddhist Saints*, p. 19-20. The implication is that the layperson is excluded from higher goals due to the absence of calm and insight practice. However, the act of giving can induce calm and, as a mutual practice, both laity and monastic not only benefit from wholesome karmic acts, but both also cultivate skilful mental states.

¹³⁸ As well as being the best of gifts, *Dhamma* is the best of relinquishments (*pariccāgā*), A I 93, 5-8. Elsewhere, a *bhikkhu* takes his share of alms food thinking thoughts of desirelessness, good will (absence of malice) and friendliness (absence of harm), A I 275, 7-8.

¹³⁹ S V 30, 26. The commentary explains *attasampadā* as the perfection of the mind. CPD s.v. *atta-sampadā*.

¹⁴⁰ A IV 160, 7-8.

¹⁴¹ A I 243, 23.

¹⁴² A I 127, 12.

¹⁴³ A I 87, 3: *yo ca pubbakārī yo ca kataññūkatavedī*.

¹⁴⁴ See Vism 307-08 and Chapter IX for all *brahmavihāras*.

meditation¹⁴⁵ and protection from all manner of forest creatures (snakes, rodents, scorpions etc).¹⁴⁶

The practice of the *brahmavihāras*, in particular, skilfully binds together concern and welfare for oneself as well as others. Inwardly directed benevolent thoughts are also intuitively directed outwardly. Whilst the community provides real occasions for practising the *brahmavihāras*, they can be practised wherever one goes. When a *bhikkhu* practises this way, genuine feelings of warmth and friendship are a ‘felt presence’ of companions, even when he is alone.¹⁴⁷

1.3.3 The voice of another and the voice within

The importance of living in a group is most evident in the notion of a spiritual teacher. Indeed, the Buddha praises any *bhikkhu* who not only engages in training but encourages others who have less zeal than himself to do the same.¹⁴⁸ In one passage, the path to the end of suffering proceeds as a series of dependent conditions starting with associating with good persons (*sappurisa*)¹⁴⁹ and hearing *Dhamma*. Progress is made through appropriate attention and mindfulness.¹⁵⁰ Amongst his group, a trainee is assigned a teacher and ‘good friend’ (*kalyāṇamitta*) to closely associate with. A *kalyāṇamitta* is not

¹⁴⁵ Through *mettā*: 1. one sleeps well, 2. one awakens happily, 3. one avoids bad dreams, 4. one is pleasing to human beings, 5. one is pleasing to spirits, 6. one is protected by deities, 7. one is not injured by fire, poisons and weapons, 8. leads to the Brahmā world. A IV 150, 9-12.

¹⁴⁶ A II 72-73. See also Vin II 109-10. These verses of loving-kindness towards small forest creatures are also in the *Khandha Paritta* (Pāli Book of Protection).

¹⁴⁷ One of verses of the *Karaṇīyametta-sutta* states that one should cherish others as a mother would protect her only child, Sn 149. The image strikes a chord with the early attachment theories of Psychoanalyst David Winnicott. Winnicott suggested that an infant acquires the capacity to be alone based on the experience of care of the mother or primary care giver. The care giver, in effect, becomes present in the psychology of the child as he develops so that when alone, he is paradoxically not alone and, moreover, he is able to connect with his own inner feelings. Discussing Winnicott’s theories, the psychotherapist Anthony Storr writes: ‘The capacity to be alone thus becomes linked with self-discovery and self-realisation’. *Solitude* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, 1988), p. 21.

¹⁴⁸ A I 238-39.

¹⁴⁹ A *sappurisa* is a person (*purisa*) who is good or true (*sat*). A *sappurisa* is someone who keeps the five precepts, and an even ‘better’ person is one who also urges others to do the same, A II 217, 20-36.

¹⁵⁰ A V 115, 16-25. The casual links are: 1. associating with genuine people; 2. hearing *Dhamma*; 3. confidence/faith; 4. systematic attention; 5. mindfulness and clear awareness; 6. guarding of the sense-faculties; 7. right conduct of body, speech and mind 8. the four foundations of mindfulness; 9. the seven factors of awakening; 10. release by knowledge, cf. D I 110.

only accomplished in virtue, concentration, wisdom, liberation and knowledge, he/she is the ideal mentor on these matters.¹⁵¹ Such a friend, ‘gives what is hard to give, does what is hard to do and patiently endures what is hard to endure.’¹⁵² Yet associating with good companions is not the only way monastics learn and progress in religious life.

The task of learning in the group can be conceived both specifically and broadly. Specifically, learning is through hearing and discussing the teachings. Here the presence of good companions is most applicable. The act of teaching can lead to the liberation of the teacher himself.¹⁵³ Such is the importance of learning in the group that the only viable alternative for any congregation not discussing *Dhamma* is ‘noble silence’.¹⁵⁴ Yet learning can also be a broader activity involving reflection on others and the sensory environment generally. A *bhikkhu* is displeasing to his colleagues if he cannot learn to patiently endure sense objects around him. One who can, is respected and honoured.¹⁵⁵ By living together, dealing with others, knowing others’ misfortune and by discussion, one who pays attention (*manasikaroti*) can learn others’ moral intentions, integrity, fortitude and wisdom.¹⁵⁶

Wholesome companionship and group life therefore provide a good framework for learning that is both specific and broad. Specifically, it involves the tutelage and companionship of a *kalyāṇamitta*. Broadly, it entails observation and the fostering of inwardly directed reflection about oneself and the others. According to the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*, the development of Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*) is considered as the interaction of both the ‘voice of another’ (*paratoghosa*) and ‘appropriate attention’ (*yonisomanasikāra*).¹⁵⁷ Hence, wisdom is nurtured by both hearing *Dhamma* from

¹⁵¹ A I 81, 15-28.

¹⁵² A I 286, 3-4: *idha bhikkhave bhikkhu duddadaṃ dadāti dukkaraṃ karoti dukkhamāṃ khamati*. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numbered Discourses*, p. 362.

¹⁵³ D III 241, 12-22.

¹⁵⁴ ‘When you have congregated, monks, there are two things that ought to be done: either a talk about the Dhamma, or noble silence.’ My translation of Ud 31, 16-18: *sannisinnānaṃ sannipatitānaṃ vo bhikkhave dvayaṃ karaṇīyaṃ: dhammiyā vā kathā ariyo vā tuṅhibhāvo’ ti*. There are three explanations for what noble silence in the Udāna commentary: 1. *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation generally, 2. second *jhāna* or 3. fourth *jhāna*, Ud-a 106, 26-29.

¹⁵⁵ A III 112-13.

¹⁵⁶ A II 187-90, cf. S I 78-79.

¹⁵⁷ M I 294, 1-3.

another, explored above as a *kalyāṇamitta*,¹⁵⁸ and careful examination of what is conducive to tranquillity and insight. In the following, I will discuss the latter principle from the perspective of meditation, and show how, as a trainee develops, the emphasis shifts to self-reliance.

Success in meditation can be seen in terms of progress in tranquillity and insight. As these spiritual faculties develop, the meditator's self-reliance strengthens. In the practice of concentration (*samādhi*), each of the four meditative absorptions (*jhānas*) constitute four of the five factors of Right Concentration. The fifth is the ability to reflect and review what has been previously experienced.¹⁵⁹ Elsewhere, the reflection of meditative attainment is amongst the five approaches of a successful trainee *bhikkhu*.¹⁶⁰ A *bhikkhu* who has not made gains in either tranquillity and insight or both should approach one who has for instruction. However, those who are developed in these can rely on their own developments as bases for further practice.¹⁶¹ Those who have developed wisdom are like grown up youths who no longer require a nurse to look after them.¹⁶² One of the qualities of a noble disciple who has attained stream entry (*sotāpanna*) or higher is that he or she is 'independent of others' (*aparappaccaya*).¹⁶³ Such a person is no longer dependent on a teacher for understanding the *Dhamma*.¹⁶⁴ Whereas the meditator is not precluded from seeking advice from a teacher on meditation

¹⁵⁸ Gethin, whilst correcting a misreading by Peter Masefield that *parato ghosa*, as the utterance 'from beyond' (i.e. *Dhamma*) mediated by the Buddha or an 'ariyan' disciple, is the only way to acquire Right View, shows that both *parato ghosa* as the 'utterance of others' and 'appropriate attention' are required. *Buddhist Path to Awakening*, pp. 222-23. See also Peter Masefield, *Divine Revelation in Pāli Buddhism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p. 52.

¹⁵⁹ This is called the reviewing sign (*paccavekkhaṇanimitta*), A III 27, 13-21 which is glossed as 'reviewing knowledge' (*paccavekkhaṇañña*) in the commentary, pointing to the knowledge that arises from reviewing meditative attainments, Mp III 235, 14.

¹⁶⁰ A *bhikkhu* who does not delight in work, sleep and company and constantly reviews his mental development will 'not fail as a trainee', A III 116, 10-15.

¹⁶¹ 'The person who gains both internal serenity of mind and the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena should base himself on those same wholesome qualities and make a further effort for the destruction of the taints', A II 95, 3-7. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, p. 476.

¹⁶² A III 6, 1-27.

¹⁶³ E.g. at D I 110, 16, A IV 186, 27 and Ud 49, 19.

¹⁶⁴ Although for some stream attainers full arahatship might swiftly follow after a further teaching from a *buddha*, D II 41-42.

matters,¹⁶⁵ it is clear that the emphasis has shifted from another's voice to meditative self-enquiry through regular and sustained attention.

The loosening of ties may appear in tension with the rule that junior monks must live in dependency of mentors. Yet total obedience of this rule is relaxed when it comes to meditation since the Buddha granted an exception to trainees who are able to live comfortably in the forest but cannot find a suitable mentor.¹⁶⁶ If the absence of a teacher indicates a degree of spiritual maturity, it can also be an occasion for a *bhikkhu* (or *bhikkhuni*) to realise that only he, himself, is responsible for his spiritual growth.¹⁶⁷ There are obvious allusions here to the increasing significance of individual practice away from the group. Indeed, the benefit of physical separation is, itself, included as one of ten personal reflections of the Buddhist renouncer: 'do I delight in empty places?'¹⁶⁸ This constant search for meditative delight in apparently uninviting and unoccupied places of the landscape is, paradoxically, how a meditator perfects his/her happiness, and, independence from others.¹⁶⁹

I have tried to show how renunciate life works in more plural settings where a *bhikkhu* engages skilfully with his colleagues. Whilst secluded places provide a clearing for one to plunge deep into the mind to reflect and learn about oneself, there is still a communal space to return to. In carrying out their practical affairs in the group, monastics must diligently maintain a sense of togetherness through action, speech and thought. Such practices are balanced by key renunciate virtues that maintain an attitude of non-attachment and selflessness such as generosity, patience and self-restraint. The principle of wholesome community seems to be as much about learning to care for oneself as it is caring for others. The emphasis on inward reflection and self-reliance is seen in the process of learning. Specific learning from a *kalyāṇamitta* is complemented by broader

¹⁶⁵ At A III 317-20, *bhikkhus* are actively encouraged to seek the help of a meditation teacher in relation to overcoming each of the hindrances to meditation.

¹⁶⁶ Vin I 92, 28-32.

¹⁶⁷ S I 186, 17-19.

¹⁶⁸ *kacci nu kho ahaṃ suññāgāre abhiraṃāmi ti*, A V 88, 13-14. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, p. 1399. See next chapter for the metaphorical as well as literal meanings of *suññāgāra*.

¹⁶⁹ 'Do I delight in empty places' means: become all alone in a separate space with regard to bodily posture, is the meaning of 'do I delight'. As he reviews this way, physical seclusion is perfected. My translation of Mp V 40, 15-17: *suññāgāre abhiraṃāmi ti vivittokāse sabbiriyāpathesu ekako'va hutvā kacci nu kho abhiraṃāmi ti attho. evaṃ paccavekkhato kāyaviveko paripūراتi*.

learning involving wise attention towards self and other. Meditation is seen to lead a gradual independence from the teacher and the broader task of learning is increasingly less reliant on company. The shift in emphasis towards independence and self-practice brings more clearly into focus how the path of an ordinary *bhikkhu* is ‘narrow’ or ‘lonely’. Monastic rules mandate that group practice remains a part of this ‘lonely path’. Nevertheless, a *bhikkhu* must still work diligently to carve out his path to liberation through his own efforts, alone.

In the next section, I will examine the circumstances through which the religious life comes to resemble ordinary society when renunciate values mentioned so far are neglected. Under these circumstances, a *bhikkhu* is faced with a reminder of how the first and second noble truths — *dukkha* and *taṇhā* are clear and present in religious life. Consequently, physical seclusion as a regular and repeated practice becomes a more salient feature of the ‘lonely path’.

1.4 Values in conflict

1.4.1 When group becomes society

So far, I have maintained an important distinction between the community of Buddhist renunciators and the conventional world — what I refer to as society. The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘society’ as:

connection; a state or condition of living or associating with others; a community, association, or group.¹⁷⁰

‘Society’ therefore assumes several imports drawing on the sociological, political and psychological. We could conceive the mainly agrarian society described in Pāli literature as exhibiting aspects of all the above with groups of people in various degrees of flux, organisation, stratification and assimilation. Society manifests broadly as an amalgamation of, *inter alia*, families, farming communities, small and large associations (*gaṇasaṅghas*), clans and kingdoms. Although the above description is not comprehensive, it at least indicates the degrees of groupings and hierarchy in which individuals identify with. Moreover, it is consonant with what is of most concern in the *nikāyas*, namely, the nature of society.

¹⁷⁰ “Society, n.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/183776. Accessed 15 July 2020.

The Pāli term most closely associated with conventional society is *saṃgaṇikā*¹⁷¹ — literally a ‘together-group’, or more loosely a ‘company of beings living together’. *Saṃgaṇikā* as lay society can be gleaned from a passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* which list five potential impediments to a *bhikkhu*’s individual spiritual growth: old age, illness, schism, and future times when people of the countryside are forced to migrate either because of a poor harvest or conflict.¹⁷² The latter foresee how people are forced to migrate and congregate in places which are either more plentiful or safer but where ‘living in a *saṃgaṇikā* is crowded’. Consequently, it will be difficult to both hear the Buddha’s teaching and to frequent quiet places distant from people.¹⁷³ Reflecting this way, a *bhikkhu* is to develop an urgency to his practice.¹⁷⁴

From the above, *saṃgaṇikā* refers ostensibly to (non-renunciate) populations, referred to generally as *manussā* or specifically as *jānapadā*. When society is threatened by scarcity and conflict, so is a renouncer’s mode of life. Access to teaching is more difficult as is individual practice because forests and other empty spaces have become less secluded.¹⁷⁵ The adjective used to describe the populations is *ākiṇṇa*, ‘crowded’ which also has a figurative meaning as ‘disordered’.¹⁷⁶ The term *ākiṇṇa* is more familiar in the canon as what describes the opposite of solitary life.¹⁷⁷ Whilst the Buddhist community is not immune to the troubles of wider society, an individual *bhikkhu* can, nonetheless, be successful in such times if he arouses energy and attains states of concentration and wisdom in the present.

The underlying point seems to be this: when ordinary society is in states of disorder, the monastic community risks following suit. Yet even if natural resources are subject to the vicissitudes of the conditioned world, individual *bhikkhus/bhikkhunīs* do not have to suffer if they apply spiritual energy. Especially important are times when ideal conditions for renouncers — access to teachings, alms food and secluded places — are supported by abundance in crops and when ordinary society is in a state of harmony.

¹⁷¹ ‘Communication, association, society’, PED s.v. *sangaṇikā*.

¹⁷² A III 103-05.

¹⁷³ A III 104, 13-16: *saṃgaṇikavīhāre kho pana sati ākiṇṇavīhāre na sukaraṃ buddhānaṃ sāsanaṃ manasikātuṃ na sukarāni araṇṇavanapatthāni pantāni senāsanāni paṭisevituṃ.*

¹⁷⁴ A III 104, 15-19.

¹⁷⁵ Presumably because the Buddha is unlikely to visit crowded places. As we have already discussed, the forest can be considered the natural habitat of the Buddha not just as the place to a natural dwelling but also to inspire his followers to practice meditation.

¹⁷⁶ Or ‘confused’ or ‘rough’, e.g. S I 204, 34; CPD s.v. *ākiṇṇa*.

¹⁷⁷ E.g. see D II 30, 16 and M II 8, 32.

When these utopic conditions are threatened, individual happiness need not be. In other words, whilst on a practical level a *bhikkhu*'s spiritual growth is dependent on society, his ultimate happiness is not. Knowledge of his interdependence with society, stirs a *bhikkhu* into achieving this ultimate happiness.

How the monastic community potentially mirrors ordinary society is illustrated through direct reference to notions of 'company' and close association. An 'increase in *saṃgaṇikā*' is listed as one of five literal dangers of fire.¹⁷⁸ This vivid description of (camp) fire is helpful in conceiving *saṃgaṇikā* as inherently enticing and communal in that it keeps one close to one's own group.¹⁷⁹ A more direct reference to *saṃgaṇikā* as 'company' appears where 'delight in *saṃgaṇikā*' is listed together with five other ways a *bhikkhu* might live in an unwholesome manner.¹⁸⁰ By not doing these, he lives wholesomely. The implication is about making company a source of happiness. Notably, the entry for *saṃgaṇikā* in the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary lists 'society, crowd, association, the opposite to *viveka*', with *viveka* translated by Franklin Edgerton as 'solitude'.¹⁸¹ In this definition, *saṃgaṇikā* stands not only for society itself but as 'company', and refers to a potential feature of the group that is detracting from the delight of seclusion.

1.4.2 Happiness: the teacher and pupil's imperative

Even though a *bhikkhu* must be alert to other manifestations of sensual pleasure, the pleasure he may derive from close company of people is particularly singled out in the *Mahāsuññata-sutta* (*MSS*)¹⁸² and contrasted with non-worldly sources of pleasure that a *bhikkhu* must pursue. The narrative context for the *MSS* is a crowded monastery where *bhikkhus* are engaged in making robes and not meditation.¹⁸³ The Buddha declares his disapproval to Ānanda by teaching several disadvantages of close association and the

¹⁷⁸ A III 256, 14-15 *saṃgaṇikāpavaḍḍhano*.

¹⁷⁹ Fire is also a visual metaphor for the home and as a Brahmin priest's primary ritual device. But in the *nikāyas*, fire represents inner wisdom or concentration, e.g. at S I 169.

¹⁸⁰ A III 292-94. The commentary glosses *saṃgaṇikā* as *gaṇasaṃgaṇikā* which could be appropriately rendered as 'group association'. Mp III 348, 16. *saṃgaṇikā ti gaṇasaṃgaṇikā*.

¹⁸¹ BHSD s.v. *saṃgaṇikā*.

¹⁸² M III 109-18.

¹⁸³ The commentary is more candid about the extent to which the *bhikkhus* had formed 'societies' and were delighting in each other's company. So, the Buddha preached that *sutta* as 'the breaker up of societies' (*gaṇabheda*), Ps IV 157, 13, Ñāṇamoli, *Greater Discourse on Voidness*, p. 9.

advantages of arousing religious happiness when he lives ‘alone, withdrawn from the group’ (*eko gaṇasmā vūpakaṭṭho*).¹⁸⁴ The Buddha explains how he experiences no tension when others approach him for a teaching because he ‘abides in emptiness (*suññatā*) internally’.¹⁸⁵ He then teaches how to practise emptiness internally and externally. The *sutta* later expands into explaining how a disciple, teacher and one who lives the holy life experience misfortune in their meditative efforts. In each case, one’s seclusion (*paviveka*) in the forest falters when they are visited by a crowd because they haven’t fully abandoned their craving. The *sutta* ends with the Buddha telling Ānanda to behave towards him with friendliness not enmity.

Peter Skilling’s study of the Pāli, Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *MSS* is not only an indispensable comparison of the different recensions but also an excellent summary of the *sutta* itself.¹⁸⁶ In Skilling’s view, the themes covered in the *MSS* are only loosely connected and there is an absence of an underlying single thread.¹⁸⁷ I agree that despite the title, emptiness is not always evident. However, the themes become more apparent when the *MSS* is read together with its preceding *sutta*, the *Cūḷasuññata-sutta* (*CSS*). A theme of the *CSS* is that a *bhikkhu* can empty his mind of thoughts of people by paying no attention to them and simply attending to the ‘perception of the forest’. The wholly unified awareness on the ‘oneness’ of the forest is a pure ‘descent into emptiness’ (*suññatāvakkanti*).¹⁸⁸ In other words, a skilled meditator need not leave for the forest, but bring the forest within. For Skilling, the overall theme is the mutual relationship between the teacher and the disciple and of the obligations of the Buddha, as one who ‘dwells in society’, to teach others who seek him out. Skilling shows how the Buddha demonstrates this in a number of ways, but he overlooks how his ‘dismissal’ of people can also be a way the Buddha leads others out of suffering, preserving both his status as teacher and his devotion to solitude. I will now turn to these points in more detail.

After the Buddha warns Ānanda about the dangers of delighting in company, he explains how he has discovered a way to abide amongst the crowd:

¹⁸⁴ M III 110, 32.

¹⁸⁵ M III 111, 15. Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 972. I will return to this point below.

¹⁸⁶ Peter Skilling, *Mahāsūtras: Great Discourses of the Buddha* vol 2 (Oxford: PTS, 1997), pp. 366-95.

¹⁸⁷ Skilling, *Mahāsūtras*, p. 394.

¹⁸⁸ M I 105, 3.

However, Ānanda, there is this abiding discovered by the Tathāgata: to enter and abide in voidness by giving not attention to all signs. If, while the Tathāgata is abiding thus, he is visited by bhikkhus or bhikkhunīs, by men and women lay followers...., he invariably talks to them in a way concerned with dismissing them (*uyyojaniya*).¹⁸⁹

In the above, Bhikkhu Bodhi translates *uyyojaniya* as ‘dismissing’. However, *uyyojaniya* has ambiguity in its meaning which must allow for a more sympathetic interpretation to the Buddha’s actions than what ‘dismissing’ might ordinarily suggest.

In her translation of the *MSS*, I.B Horner argued that the Buddha would appear ‘selfish’ to simply dismiss the crowd only for the sake of his own seclusion.¹⁹⁰ Horner pointed out that the verb *uyyojeti* is used elsewhere in the same context where the commentary supports an interpretation of the Buddha as both teaching and dismissing. This interpretation fits because *uyyojeti* can also be translated as ‘to cause effort’ (or more loosely, ‘to inspire’).¹⁹¹ From the latter we get the alternative meaning of *uyyojaniya* as ‘urging or impelling’. Margaret Cone’s translation of *uyyojaniya-paṭisaṃyutta* as ‘connected with rousing to action; coupled with a dismissal’¹⁹² supports a broader interpretation of the above passage.¹⁹³ That is, dismissing and inspiring are not mutually exclusive and that the Buddha both speaks to inspire his followers as well as telling them to disperse and practice themselves. This principle is consistent with when, later in the *MSS*, the Buddha tells Ānanda, ‘it is fit for a follower to pursue the teacher even if he is being dispelled (*payujjamāno*)’.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ M II 111, 6-15: *ayaṃ kho paṇ', Ānanda, vihāro Tathāgatena abhisambuddho, yadidaṃ sabbanimittānaṃ amanasikārā ajjhataṃ suññataṃ upasampajja viharituṃ. tatra ce, Ānanda, Tathāgataṃ iminā vihārena viharantaṃ bhavanti upasaṃkamtāro bhikkhū bhikkhuniyo upāsakā ...uyyojanīyapaṭisaṃyuttaṃ yeva kathaṃ kattā hoti.* Translation by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Boston: Wisdom, 2009), p. 972.

¹⁹⁰ I. B. Horner, *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings - Majjhima Nikāya Vol 3* (Lancaster: PTS, 1959), pp. 154-55, n. 8.

¹⁹¹ MW s.v. *ud-√yuj*.

¹⁹² DOP I s.v. *uyyojanika*.

¹⁹³ It is supported in the commentary which states ‘[the talk] is associated with a word of dismissal such as “you should go”’; My translation of Ps IV 160, 18-19: *gacchatha tumhe ti evaṃ uyyojanikena vacanena paṭisaṃyuttaṃ.*

¹⁹⁴ M III 115, 27-28: *Ānanda, kathāya hetu arahati sāvako satthāraṃ anubandhituṃ api payujjamāno.* Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 976.

Understanding *uyyojaniya* as both ‘dismissing’ and ‘inspiring’, the Buddha’s action is not in tension with his status as *kalyāṇamitta*.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, in a passage from the *Udāna*, the Buddha’s seclusion is disturbed by five hundred noisy monks.¹⁹⁶ Instead of directly preaching to them, the Buddha calls them into his hermitage, admonishes them and then sends them away (*paṇāmeti*). The *bhikkhus* quietly withdraw into meditation huts for the rains retreat. Living ‘withdrawn, heedful, ardent and steadfast’¹⁹⁷ and in a way that the Buddha would be ‘satisfied with’ (*attamana*), they all attain arahatship. What appears as an instruction to ‘go away’ at once maintains the Buddha’s solitude and encourages others to do the same. Perhaps the clearest example of this principle is captured in the following:

Whatever a teacher, desiring his disciples’ welfare should do for them out of kindness, through kindness, this I have done for you. Here are roots of trees. Here are deserted houses. Meditate, monks! Do not later have regrets. This is my instruction to you.¹⁹⁸

There are other examples that use similar motifs to urge monks/nuns to meditate away from the crowd. One passage from *Aṅuttara Nikāya*, does this by also warning that a teacher’s ability to attract followers can be a source of unskilful pleasure. Here, the Buddha’s solitude is disturbed by a group of devoted but noisy householders.¹⁹⁹ Instead of acquiescing to the crowd, the Buddha instead contrasts the happiness of fame and praise with the happiness of renunciation, seclusion and awakening as the Buddha has himself gained. The Buddha goes on to explain how a forest-dweller (*āraññaka*) will always be at an advantage to a *bhikkhu* who meditates near the village. Even if the latter attains a level of *samādhi*, he is more easily drawn away by the attention of the crowd. On the other hand, even if the forest dweller has yet to attain *samādhi*, he will be in a

¹⁹⁵ Elsewhere, the Buddha rebukes a *bhikkhu* for asking for a teaching even after the *Dhamma* has been explained. The *bhikkhu* persists and the Buddha gives a teaching that leads to the *bhikkhu*’s full liberation, A III 299-302.

¹⁹⁶ Ud 24-27.

¹⁹⁷ A stock phrase commonly attributed to attaining arahantship. Ud 25, 24-25; *vūpakaṭṭhā appamattā ātāpino pahitattā*;

¹⁹⁸ A IV 139, 23-27: *yaṃ bhikkhave satthārā karaṇīyaṃ sāvakanāṃ hitesinā anukampakena anukampaṃ upādāya, kataṃ vo taṃ mayā. etāni bhikkhave rukkhamūlāni etāni suññāgārāni. jhāyatha bhikkhave, mā pamādattha, mā pacchā vippaṭisārino ahuvattha. ayaṃ vo amhākaṃ anusāsānī ti.* Translation by Gethin, *Sayings of the Buddha*, p. 263. cf. S V 157, 23-27 and M I 46, 6-11.

¹⁹⁹ A III 341-34.

better position to advert his mind to his object of concentration and rouse his energy. A similar contrast is used elsewhere to admonish *bhikkhus* who assemble intent on living amongst the multitudes,²⁰⁰ who take pleasure in company²⁰¹ or who overeat and become slothful. In each of these cases, the Buddha's solitude is contrasted to the dangers of worldly happiness in communal life.

Clearly the Buddha has special status as *kalyāṇamitta* par excellence. The Buddha's dismissal appears as a lesson to his *bhikkhus* to meditate as do occasions where the Buddha maintains a distance from the crowd.²⁰² Yet clearly tensions between individual practice and living in a group become apparent for both the ordinary unenlightened follower and teacher who fall short of the Buddha's example. Both are susceptible to unskilful sources of happiness and therefore need to preserve their individual practice.

The *kalyāṇamitta* is both an adept and a teacher; an exemplar of one's own practice as well as advocate of that practice. From the qualities described, such a one is alluded to be more than just virtuous but attained in the practice. As a result of his fortitude and exemplary practice in seclusion,²⁰³ others follow his example. In his absence, the best alternative is someone closest to this ideal, but those candidates are pulled in opposing directions: there is not only a need to undertake the task of inner work, but also to be the external pillar of support for others. Echoes of this tension can be heard from voices in the developed Theravāda tradition. Any teacher who finds no time to practice himself because of his followers should devote himself to seclusion if his students are learned. If they still need instruction, he should recommend another teacher. Failing that, he should instruct them as follows: 'Friends, I have a task to see to; go where it suits you'.²⁰⁴

1.4.3 Community as saṃsāra

How the religious community can hold back individual liberation is made more explicit elsewhere. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* describes six circumstances that make it impossible to

²⁰⁰ *saṅgaṇikavihāraṃ anuyattā viharanti*, A IV 343, 1.

²⁰¹ By 'laughing and playing, poking each other with their fingers', A IV 343,3-4.

²⁰² Chapter 5 is devoted to an extended story about unruly monks that articulates the tensions mentioned here as well as solitude, silence and teaching.

²⁰³ A I 71, 14: *paviveke pubbaṅgama*, loosely, 'taking the lead in seclusion'

²⁰⁴ Vism 93-94. Translation by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, 4th edition (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), p. 90.

realise *nibbāna*.²⁰⁵ The first impediment to the path starts with taking pleasure in company. In doing so, it is impossible for one to find delight alone in seclusion. Without proper seclusion, it is impossible that he/she would acquire the ‘object of mind’ (*cittassa nimittam*) for meditation. Without that object of mind, it is impossible that he/she would accomplish Right View. Without bringing Right View to completion, he/she will not bring Right Concentration to completion. Without Right Concentration, he/she will not abandon the fetters and attain *nibbāna*. The passage goes on to confirm that by not finding delight in company, the right condition is found for the delight of seclusion and so on towards *nibbāna*. Although the above does not suggest a *bhikkhu* must always be physically alone to be properly secluded, other passages suggest that physical seclusion is normative, as in the *MSS*:²⁰⁶

Indeed Ānanda, for a *bhikkhu* who takes pleasure in society [*saṃgaṇikā*], enjoys society, is devoted to delight in society, takes pleasure in the crowd [*gaṇa*], enjoys the crowd, rejoices in crowd, it is not possible that he would enter upon and abide in the freedom of mind that is temporary and pleasing or non-temporary and unshakeable. But, Ānanda, a *bhikkhu* who lives alone and withdrawn from the crowd, for that *bhikkhu*, it is expected that he would enter upon and abide in the freedom of mind that is temporary and pleasing or non-temporary and unshakeable.²⁰⁷

The passage mentions two types of ‘group’: *saṃgaṇikā* with its wider implications described above and *gaṇa* more selectively as a monk’s ‘own crowd’ given that a *gaṇācariyo* is a teacher of a group of followers.²⁰⁸ The above passage quite clearly suggests that the religious group risks becoming no different to society at large when a *bhikkhu* becomes enamoured by company.

²⁰⁵ A III 422-3.

²⁰⁶ In the next chapter, I discuss the unique aspects of the *Mahāsuññata Sutta* in relation to other path schema, particularly in relation to how virtue is developed within the context of physical seclusion and the attainment of emptiness. For example, how a monk/nun who is situated within a community yet susceptible to distraction from the meditative path.

²⁰⁷ My translation of M III 110-11: *so vat’, Ānanda, bhikkhu saṃgaṇikārāmo saṃgaṇikārato saṃgaṇikārāmatam anuyutto gaṇārāmo gaṇarato gaṇasammudito sāmāyikaṃ vā kantam cetovimuttiṃ upasampajja viharissati asāmāyikaṃ vā akuppan ti, — n’ etaṃ thānaṃ vijjati: yo ca kho so, Ānanda, bhikkhu eko gaṇasmā vūpakaṭṭho viharati, tass’ etaṃ bhikkhuno pāṭikaṅkhaṃ sāmāyikaṃ vā kantam cetovimuttiṃ upasampajja viharissati asāmāyikaṃ vā akuppan ti, — thānam etaṃ vijjati.*

²⁰⁸ Noting that *gaṇācariyo* is used to describe each of the six *titthiyas* or ‘heretical’ teachers, where each is described as having a ‘group’ and being a ‘teacher of a group’; D I 47, 16; *c’ eva gaṇī ca gaṇācariyo.*

The notion of how, on one hand, religious life might be saṃsāric when there are latent mental corruptions and, on the other, how seclusion is nibbānic, is stressed in two ways in the *MSS*. Firstly, the Buddha declares that he does not see a single kind of form (*rūpa*) which, due to its inherent nature of impermanence, would not lead to suffering in someone who lusts after it.²⁰⁹ The commentary takes *rūpa* here to be physical body (*sārira*).²¹⁰ We know from elsewhere how external form as both group or individual is singled out as objects of desire.²¹¹ Secondly, we can surmise that according to the *MSS*, the Buddha’s approach to solitary life is the only one that brings the highest reward.²¹² Only his teaching is what intrinsically supports a *bhikkhu*’s ability to live properly secluded from desire and craving. Any other teacher or his follower who goes off to practice alone in a forest but not following this path is, *ipso facto*, never properly secluded. They succumb to their desires and so suffer from rebirth and redeath.²¹³ Consequently, a follower of the Buddha’s teaching who, having resorted to solitary places only to revert to the delight of company, faces the most serious ‘misfortune’ (*upaddava*) of a future state of suffering (*vinipāta*).²¹⁴ Only when he/she lives withdrawn from the group (*eko gaṇasmā vūpakaṭṭho viharati*) can he/she direct their mind inward and begin to find a source of true happiness.²¹⁵

What is particularly distinctive about the *MSS* is that it describes a form of a path whilst recognising that an individual *bhikkhu* is likely to be living within a group. Whilst we cannot ignore that he must take a balanced approach to social duties and obligations without neglecting meditation,²¹⁶ the danger of company is particularly singled out. The delight he might seek in company is contrasted to the non-worldly forms of happiness

²⁰⁹ M III 111, 1-3.

²¹⁰ Ps IV 159, 18.

²¹¹ E.g. A III 259, 7-15.

²¹² The nuances of the *Mahāsuññata-sutta* path scheme compared to others are explained in Chapter 2.

²¹³ M III 116, 9-20.

²¹⁴ M III 117, 1-13. According to the commentary, the pain of succumbing to craving in a teaching that only provides worldly benefits (*lokiyagūṇa*) is like falling from the back of a donkey. The greater pain of falling away from supramundane benefits, (*lokuttaragūṇa*) is like a Khattiya prince who falls off a back of an elephant, Ps IV 165, 15-25.

²¹⁵ M III 110, 23-28.

²¹⁶ A III 116-18.

that buoys the mind and keeps a *bhikkhu* on the meditative path.²¹⁷ According to the gradual path schema,²¹⁸ the fourth *jhāna*, is the transition point for the formless attainments, for developing various powers and for realising liberating knowledges. However, according to the *MSS*, after he attains fourth *jhāna*, the *bhikkhu* pays attention to whether his mind has entered into emptiness internally and externally and to the purity of his conduct.²¹⁹ Having developed the *jhānas*, insight into the rise and fall of the five aggregates of grasping (*upādānakkhandhā*) is to be cultivated until the conceit of ‘I am’ is abandoned.²²⁰

Set against the context of settled monastic life,²²¹ the *MSS* can be considered to include a warning against monastic communities becoming no different to ordinary societies.²²² The pleasures of company are no different to the pleasures of a lay person. They only bind a one to saṃsāric existence. A *bhikkhu* must discard these pleasures and constantly review their progress in meditative life as well as individual conduct. Just as a householder surrounded by home and family does at the very early stages of renunciation, a *bhikkhu* surrounded by their colleagues and benefactors, must understand the truth of their situation: withdrawal is a necessary condition of the renouncer.

The commentary to the *MSS* is quite candid in its depiction of the problems of large settlements of monastics. Buddhaghosa describes in detail how some societies in the human realm are like those of the hells, animals and hungry ghosts.²²³ He explains that the Buddha expounded the *sutta* in order to right a wrong made by *bhikkhus* who form societies and find delight therein. According to Buddhaghosa, they are potentially destined for bad rebirths.²²⁴ Such a depiction does little to support Ray’s representation of the Buddhist commentarial tradition as appropriating the ascetic voice of forest monks but effectively silencing it to promote a more settled monasticism by the fifth century

²¹⁷ The happiness of renunciation (*nekkhammasukha*), the happiness of seclusion (*pavivekasukha*), the happiness of tranquillity (*upasamasukhaṃ*) and the happiness of awakening (*sambodhasukhaṃ*), M III 110, 20-22.

²¹⁸ See next chapter.

²¹⁹ M III 112-14.

²²⁰ He attains mind deliverances that are ‘entirely wholesome, noble, supramundane and unsusceptible to evil’, M III 115, 8-9.

²²¹ The *sutta* is set at Nigrodha’s hermitage built by the benefactor Kāḷākhemaka where the Buddha encounters many resting places and monks making robes. M III 110, 1-7.

²²² Ps IV 155, 12-13.

²²³ Ps IV 155-56.

CE.²²⁵ Instead, it is consistent with the *nikāya* view that the routinised monastery is potentially counterproductive to meditative life when renunciate qualities are absent.

Wijayaratna might point out how the settled community is no obstacle to the Buddhist monastic. Monasteries make wandering easier since they act as welcoming places of shelter and essential monastic chores including robe-making²²⁶ — an activity specifically mentioned in the *MSS*.²²⁷ Wijayaratna could draw support from the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* in which the Buddha sanctions congregations (*sannipāta*) if they assemble and disperse in harmony.²²⁸ Monastic work is acknowledged but not as a source of delight,²²⁹ and to be taken up at the right time.²³⁰

However, a connecting passage in the same *sutta* also enjoins monastics to maintain a longing for forest dwellings and preserve their mindfulness in order to prosper. They then attract good associates (*sabrahmacārī*) and maintain ease (*phāsu*) in companionship.²³¹ The Buddha goes on to explain seven principles through which monastics maintain their welfare. They are not to become devoted to work (*kamma*), conversation, sleep, company, have harmful desires and bad companions or be content with lesser spiritual achievements.²³²

Whilst there is a clear need to guard against attachment to communal life, I suggest that, from the imagery of physical seclusion, meditation is again stressed as key to successful community life. The commentary to the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* passage even echoes the advice of the Buddha in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* discussed above. That is, a *bhikkhu* who stays in the forest, even if it is just to sleep, is praised more highly by the

²²⁵ Ray, *Buddhist Saints*, p. 318.

²²⁶ Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, p. 28.

²²⁷ The Buddha permitted Ānanda to make a robe modelled on a paddy field (Vin I 287), Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, p. 386.

²²⁸ D II 76, 31-33.

²²⁹ D II 77-78.

²³⁰ According to the commentary: ‘But when one does these things only at the time for doing them, i.e. takes instruction at the right time for instruction, studies during the right time for study, performs one’s duties in the courtyard round a shrine (*cetiya*), at the right time for doing that, applies his mind at the right time for applying it, then he is not called “one finding pleasure in work”’. Sv II 528, 21-25. Translation by Yang-Gyu An, *The Buddha’s Last Days: Buddhaghosa’s Commentary on the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (Oxford: PTS, 2003), p. 31.

²³¹ D II 77, 15-22. *yāvakiṇṇaṃ ca bhikkhave bhikkhū ārañṇakesu senāsanesu sāpekhā bhavissanti, vuddhi yeva bhikkhave bhikkhūnaṃ pāṭikaṅkhā no parihān* (D II 77, 15-17).

²³² D II 78, 1-27.

Buddha than one who achieves *jhāna* dwelling near a village.²³³ This is because the former will wake enrapt by the natural aubade of the forest whilst the latter is unlikely to maintain even a basic level of concentration due to the distraction of people and activity.²³⁴ Although there is no repudiation of activity in the monastery, there is clearly a warning against the problems of living there. Again, *sutta* and commentary appear consonant with regards to the value of physical seclusion.

That community life is balanced by repeated ‘calls to the forest’ suggest that a *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* is to be mindful of close group living have constant vigilance towards craving. In this sense, a *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* is reminded that he/she is living in *saṃsāra*. In some examples, the contrast is made with reference to how meditation heals the effects of *dukkha* that might otherwise manifest in group life. In a passage from the *Samyutta Nikāya*, a certain *bhikkhu* prefers ‘living at ease’ in silence to helping other *bhikkhus* make robes.²³⁵ Whilst ‘living at ease in silence’ is suggestive of an additional therapeutic dimension to seclusion as in a sense of lifting a burden, it is clarified as dwelling in all four *jhānas*. Instead of being chastised for eschewing his duties and preferring his ‘inner separation’ from others, the *bhikkhu* is praised. Elsewhere in the *Theragāthā* commentary, *apposukka* is described as a state free from ‘internal danger’ suggesting an absence of fear or worry,²³⁶ namely affective states rooted in craving.

In another passage, a *bhikkhu* who is ‘crowded’ (*ākiṇṇa*) by his group can, figuratively speaking, relieve this ‘itch’ by withdrawing to the forest. The passage goes on to mention a list of physically secluded places to abandon emotional disturbances (*nīvaraṇa*) and attain successive levels of tranquillity meditation, each one ‘relieving his itch’, i.e. his mental afflictions. Doing so, he is just like a bull elephant who, formerly crowded and jostled by other elephants in the herd, literally relieves his itch by rubbing his body with branches of a tree.²³⁷ With help from a wonderfully vivid example of comparative psychology, the message is clear: the conditions of group life can have a limiting effect for a *bhikkhu* aspiring to achieve real religious goals. At another level, the

²³³ Here the commentary mirrors canonical passages at cf A.III 30-32, A III 343-34 and A IV 343-44, see below.

²³⁴ Sv II 527, 2-11. See Yang-Gyu An, *The Buddha’s Last Days*, p. 28.

²³⁵ S II 277-8.

²³⁶ Th-a I 135, 1: *etena abbhantaraparissayābhāvato apposukkataṃ dasseti*.

²³⁷ A IV 435-38.

simile speaks of the therapeutic effects that physical withdrawal brings in securing even ordinary levels of relief.

To sum up here, we can note that, at least according to a particular cross-section of canonical passages explored thus far, physical seclusion in some form appears as a valid part of monastic life. The place of seclusion in the gradual path is explored in greater detail in the next chapter where I will examine the extent to which seclusion is described through formulaic expression across the *nikāyas* and assess their relative emphases. The recommendations for solitary practice, I suggest, recognise that in leaving ordinary society and entering another community, a *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* must be mindful of the dangers of close association with their colleagues and that they are in a sense continuously renouncing ‘society’. We can understand this situation in terms of the first two noble truths. Large monastic groups are particularly at risk of resembling ordinary society and therefore sometimes painful. Yet suffering arises because of attachment towards others, craving (*taṇhā*) for company and misperceiving (*avijjā*) how pleasures of company, rather than the delight of meditation, are an appropriate source of happiness for spiritual growth. Alongside warnings, there is a consistent appeal for solitude — the spiritually buoyant experience of physical and mental seclusion — as a salient feature of the path to the cessation of *dukkha*. The Buddha’s own solitude is not only a pleasant abiding for himself, but a teaching for others to undertake seclusion. The following section examines this idea further with particular reference to withdrawal from the group (*kāyaviveka*) and its implication that a *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* is continuously renouncing from society.

1.5 Physical withdrawal as a normative practice

The importance of the forest as a place of meditation and spiritual reward is a motif that is explored throughout this dissertation. The following includes examples that present, as I argue, the forest as the ideal place of meditation, but also highlight the need for frequent and regular individual practice away from the group. Physical withdrawal as a formal element of the gradual path is described consistently in the text as physical seclusion or *kāyaviveka*.

The *Vanasamyutta*²³⁸ of the *Samyutta Nikāya* comprises fourteen *suttas* involving mostly unspecified (*aññatara*) but also some named *bhikkhus* who are admonished and then encouraged by *devatās* championing their causes. Several *suttas* appear as pep talks to solitary *bhikkhus* whose practice has strayed in some way. For example, they reminisce about household life,²³⁹ become sleepy,²⁴⁰ approach villages at the wrong time²⁴¹ or are gripped by inappropriate thoughts.²⁴² After each ‘conversation’, the *bhikkhu* in question typically acquires urgency to his practice. In one case, a *devatā* admonishes the Buddha’s principal attendant, Ānanda, who, although situated in the forest, is seen teaching laypeople instead of meditating alone.²⁴³ A separate set of passages in the *Bhikkhunīsamyyutta*²⁴⁴ within the same collection describe examples of *bhikkhunīs* who remain firm in their solitary forest practice despite Māra’s²⁴⁵ attempts to scupper them. A recurring formula that accompanies a commitment to physical seclusion is how a *bhikkhu* should live: attentive (*appamatto*), determined (*ātāpī*) and resolute (*pahitto*). These are the qualities that the Buddha recommends to Samiddhi whose solitary meditation is repeatedly disturbed by Māra. Alone in seclusion, Samiddhi eventually finally defeats Māra when he knows that his mindfulness, wisdom and concentration are fully matured.²⁴⁶ I will discuss in a later chapter, how the forest is imagined in Pāli texts as a place of transformation. For now, we can note how the forest is conceived as the ideal place for individual spiritual work, not for congregation. The *Vanasamyutta* stories can be interpreted as either a kind of ‘divine’ intervention²⁴⁷ that prompts more

²³⁸ A single chapter (*vagga*) comprising nine connected *suttas* about *bhikkhus* in the forest (*vana*).

²³⁹ S I 197 (9:1).

²⁴⁰ S I 197-8 (9:2).

²⁴¹ S I 200-01 (9:7).

²⁴² S I 203 (9:11).

²⁴³ S I 199-200 (9:5).

²⁴⁴ S I 128-135.

²⁴⁵ For a discussion on how Māra is considered both as a being and as the embodiment of sense-desire see Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, pp. 23-24.

²⁴⁶ S I 119-20.

²⁴⁷ Divine encouragement might be viewed, at an inner or psychological level, in terms of the personal realisation of meditating monks/nuns given a narrative twist. But any interpretation of this ‘intervention’ being instigated by external divine beings must be distinguished from ‘divine grace’ in Christianity as God’s redeeming action. Rather, gods are conceived in Buddhist thought as conditioned beings subject to rebirth. Their inclusion here may seem to make at least two points. Firstly, that subtle beings exist in the cosmos and they too can have knowledge of

appropriate effort or as a personal realisation. Either way, the forest is afforded a special status as a place representing extraordinary potential.

Although the *Vanasamyutta* passages remind us that physical separation by itself is clearly insufficient for the potential transformations assumed therein, the forest is still presented as pervasive. Some of the examples in the *Vanasamyutta* perhaps better represent traces of ‘wrong’ and ‘right’ solitude that are intimated in the *Bhaddekarattasutta* and elsewhere in the Pāli Canon.²⁴⁸ However, unlike other examples of this distinction, the protagonists of the *Vanasamyutta* are not advised to return to the group but remain steadfast in their solitary efforts. What I am arguing is being reflected in the *Vanasamyutta* is that by remaining committed to physical seclusion, even if a *bhikkhu* takes his weaknesses with him, forest practice still appears as good or desirable. Even if he is a committed community member, withdrawal from others is still central to monastic life and speaks of physical seclusion in continuum with the notion of abandoning society at the beginning of the path.

Even in passages that recommend living in the group for those who are challenged by the forest, the need for continuous renunciation remains implicit. A verse from the *Samyutta Nikāya* firstly repeats the sentiment of Mahācunda’s verse at Th 142, namely how one who does not make spiritual gains in solitary places should always return to the monastic community.²⁴⁹ The verse is followed by a reminder to remain aloof from village life:

Walking for alms from family to family,
Faculties guarded, discreet, mindful,
One should resort to remote lodgings,

religious teachings and can even be ‘noble’ (the Buddha is ‘teacher of both gods and humans’). Deities are shown to have understood the teachings though not liberating insight and are so, not infallible. Secondly, there is some utility in the gods as sources of inspiration which is not contrary to individual responsibility. Whilst these stories might speak of the forest as a ‘thin place’, they also remind the reader of how certain mental states developed as a human can lead to rebirth in heavenly realms.

²⁴⁸ In the next chapter, I will explore in more detail how notions of ‘right’ seclusion contrasts with examples of ‘wrong’ seclusion.

²⁴⁹ S I 154, 16-19:

sevetha pantāni senāsanāni ||
careyya samyojanavippamokkhā ||
sa ce ratim nādhiḡacchaye tattha ||
saṅghe vase rakkhitatto satimā || ||

Freed from fear, liberated in the fearless.²⁵⁰

There is a clear reminder here that meditation is a separate practice away from the group. Here again, forest and other isolated places are referenced as achieving both mental and physical ‘separation’. One who chooses to remain in the company of other monastics is to be vigilant of unwholesome and unhelpful behaviours. Yet the commentary to these verses recommends that a *bhikkhu* who has entered the monastic community should still heed the call of the forest: ‘But having made the mind ready, having gladdened and pleased the mind, he should, again, dwell in a remote lodging’.²⁵¹

Whilst monastery and forest appear as two valid arenas, there is still the need for a *bhikkhu* to rely on his own spiritual faculties regardless of his habitat. In a passage in the *Milindapañha* that quotes the Th 142/S I 154 verse above, the *arahat* Nāgasena compares the *bhikkhu* to a bird who flies alone to the woods for food but at night returns to the flock for protection. The point being that the flock provides protection from fear that the bird alone is unable to cultivate.²⁵² But the simile lends itself well to the clarification added in the commentary to the aforementioned verse. It seems to me that if the bird is well nourished, it can live without fear by flying away from danger just as a *bhikkhu* who finds delight in living alone can live independent of his group. To put it another way, the activities in the group will eventually become less crucial for spiritual growth. One who does need return to the group must live there protected and guarded until his mind is made ready to be fully independent of the group. Realistically, this entails practical steps of physical seclusion.

The practice of meditation need not necessarily be a commitment to forest-dwelling but rather a regular and repeated practice of meditation where physical seclusion entails just stepping away to a quiet place. Regular practice appears to be reflected by the frequently occurring term, *divāvihāra*, ‘day’s dwelling’ which describes

²⁵⁰ S I 154, 20-23. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (Oxford: PTS, 2000), p.248.

kulā kulam piṇḍikāya caranto ||
indriyagutto nipako satimā ||
sevetha pantāni senāsanāni ||
bhayā pamutto abhaye vimutto || ||

²⁵¹ My translation of Spk I 220, 23-24: *cittakallataṃ pana janetvā cittaṃ hāsetvā tosetvā puna pantasenāsane vaseyyā ti.*

²⁵² Mil 402, 10-29.

a daily retreat into seclusion, typically in the afternoon.²⁵³ The *Vanasamyutta* passages mentioned in the previous chapter involve various *bhikkhus* whose *divāvihāra* is clearly linked to skilful spiritual exercise in which seclusion is made ‘right’ through application of both body and mind.

The ascetic impulse for physical seclusion as part of the daily life of a monastic in continuum with the principle of renouncing ‘society’ persists clearly and unambiguously in Pāli literature. This is not to say that meditation is only possible in the forest and in other ‘empty’ places. Listening to *Dhamma* can induce states of joy and calm.²⁵⁴ Even devotional acts such offerings (*pūjā*) can also develop calm states.²⁵⁵ Still, references to physical seclusion for meditation frequently identify the forest as the most favourable place for religious striving for all *bhikkhus*. But how realistic is it to assume that frequent periods alone as part of daily monastic life are prescribed to all and not just committed forest-dwelling *bhikkhus*?

Several passages in the *nikāyas* describe how other wanderers (*paribbājakas*) claim that their teachings overlap with the Buddha’s. In one passage, wanderers of other sects declare that they also teach about greed, hatred and delusion like the Buddha. However, the Buddha explains how his teaching leads to greater understanding as to the nature of these and what leads to their abandonment.²⁵⁶ Elsewhere in the *Bhojjanāgasamyutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, a group of other *paribbājakas* claim that their teachings also include abandoning five hindrances (*nīvaraṇas*) to meditation and developing the seven factors of awakening (*sattabojjhaṅgā*) like the Buddha’s teaching.²⁵⁷ However, the Buddha tells his *bhikkhus* that, unlike him, those *paribbājakas* do not give a full teaching on how to fully abandon the hindrances and develop the

²⁵³ The term *divāvihāra* is mostly used to describe the Buddha’s retreat into seclusion often seated at the foot of a tree in a certain wood (e.g. D I 102, 6, M I 229, 21-22 and I 501, 27-29) but also the daily practice of his *bhikkhus* who follow in his example (e.g. M I 146, 32 and S I 130, 1-3).

²⁵⁴ D III 241, 8-11.

²⁵⁵ As Gethin writes, the line between devotion and meditation is not precise. Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, pp. 110 and 179.

²⁵⁶ The Buddha’s followers know that lust is a lesser fault than hatred or delusion, but lust and hatred take longer to uproot than delusion. They also understand that an increase in these states is due to inappropriate attention and how appropriate attention leads to their decrease and abandonment. A I 199-201.

²⁵⁷ See the next chapter for a discussion of these terms.

bhojjaṅgas and how they lead to ‘freedom of mind’ (*ceto-vimutti*) and liberation.²⁵⁸ That is, how the *bhojjaṅgas* are an ascetic practice that require constant exertion to cultivate wholesome states whilst firmly opposing unwholesome states.²⁵⁹

Gethin has used passages like this to argue that the Buddha’s teaching may have shared a common ground with other *paribbājakas* regarding a basis in meditative development. However, only the Buddha and his *bhikkhus* are able to fully understand and develop these.²⁶⁰ It is then, not only the sustained and rigorous application of the enlightenment factors, but knowledge of their relationship with other factors and the full extent of their application that distinguishes the Buddha’s teaching.

Erich Frauwallner had earlier also observed the similarities between the Buddhist path and other ascetic approaches. Comparing Buddhist meditation with *jñāna yoga* in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, he showed how both traditions teach physical seclusion and the elimination of hindrances.²⁶¹ Yet Frauwallner also highlighted that in the Buddhist case, sense restraint is an applied effort not just in solitary meditation. One is to sustain this clarity in the mind that has ‘become one’ or ‘concentrated’ (*ekodibhūta*).²⁶² Whilst this supports the principle laid out in the *Bhojjaṅgasamyutta*, it may be problematic to necessarily assume that physical seclusion was practised more prominently by the Buddha’s followers than other renunciators. As Frauwallner also pointed out, mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*), when mastered by a *bhikkhu*, accompanies all ‘action’.²⁶³ The practice of assimilating and bringing all enlightening factors to

²⁵⁸ S IV 115-21. That is, how the five hindrances become ten (when they are viewed as part of oneself and in another), how the *bhojjaṅgas* become fourteen and accompany loving kindness, leading to ‘freedom of mind’ (*cetovimutti*) and liberation. The seven *bhojjaṅgas* become fourteen as follows: mindfulness, *Dhamma*-investigation and equanimity by taking *dhammas* internally or externally; joy and concentration can be either accompanied or not accompanied by sustained and examining thought; tranquillity and effort can be either of body or of mind. Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, pp.177-78.

²⁵⁹ Bhikkhu Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna. The Direct Path to Realization* (Cambridge: Windhorse, 2008), p. 35 n. 21.

²⁶⁰ Gethin, *Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p. 180-82. This points to the possibility that the Buddha and his *bhikkhus* were, together with other groups, part of a distinct set of *paribbājakas*.

²⁶¹ Erich Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy I*. Translated by V.M. Bedekar (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), p. 135.

²⁶² Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy I*, p. 136. *ekodibhūta* is used synonymously with *ekodibhāva* which is a quality of *jhāna*, see below.

²⁶³ Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy I*, p. 136.

completion thereby distinguishes a *bhikkhu*'s continuous efforts from other ascetics. not only the sustained and rigorous application

The enlightenment factors take a *bhikkhu* as *paribbājaka* much further but require sustained and advanced effort. Meditative effort accompanies all modes of behaviour since the *bhikkhu* seeks to be 'alone' in all postures.²⁶⁴ The principle of sustained and advanced effort required by the Buddha's teaching as compared to others is also a theme of the *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta*. Here, Nigrodha, the *paribbājaka*, mistakenly thinks that ascetic life attains its peak purity when an ascetic has purified himself of the behaviours that might fault his behaviour.²⁶⁵ The Buddha teaches him a version of the gradual path that takes him much further to where ascetic life 'penetrates to the pith'.²⁶⁶ To do so, an ascetic finds a solitary dwelling in the forest, etc., practices mindfulness and abandons the hindrances. But before that, he/she establishes themselves firmly in the basis of virtue. Physical seclusion is clearly present in parts the Buddhist path as a normative part of attaining the 'pith' of ascetic life but by itself is not sufficient. It is part of a continuum that maintains his/her commitment to the principles of renunciation.

The commitment to meditation and its basis in physical seclusion keeps a monk/nun on a lonely path, but they are not alone or disconnected from the community when equipped with qualities that allow them to emulate noble ones practising rightly or who have attained sanctity. It is possible to glean such a characterisation from the *Mahāgosinga-sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, which also speaks of the more encompassing vision of renunciate life.²⁶⁷ When the Buddha was staying in the Gosinga Sala Wood, six of his great disciples convened out in the open on one resplendent moonlit night. The Buddha asks each of them to propose an ideal quality that could match the beauty of the moonlit wood. Each suggests a quality that best fits his own strengths. For Ānanda, it is one who learns *Dhamma* that adorns the wood. For Revata, it is one who enjoys seclusion (*paṭisallāṇā-rāmo*) and delights in seclusion (*paṭisallāṇa-rata*). For Anuruddha, it is one who possesses divine vision. For Mahā Kassapa, it is a *bhikkhu* who devotes himself to forest practice. For Moggallāna, it is one who talks in accordance with

²⁶⁴ How a monk attempts to be 'alone' or 'single' in all modes of life is discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

²⁶⁵ D III 49, 7-13.

²⁶⁶ The path in the *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta* path differs from the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* in that it includes the four *brahmavihāras* leading to knowledge of the death and rebirth of all beings but not knowledge, D III 52, 1-20.

²⁶⁷ M I 212-19.

Dhamma. And, for Sāriputta, it is one who has fully mastered his mind. The Buddha agrees with each of his disciples, but he goes on to declare how any of his followers could also ‘illuminate’ the Gosinga Wood; by sitting down with legs crossed and mindfulness established in front of them accompanied by a firm resolve not to break their meditation until the mind is fully liberated.

1.6 Conclusion

Any examination into the nature of Buddhist renunciation in Pāli literature cannot overlook how monastic life is both social and non-social. In this chapter, I have argued that a *bhikkhu* (or *bhikkhunī*), as a distinct type of Indian ascetic or *samaṇa*, can strive to be never alone on his lonely path to liberation.²⁶⁸ Meditation and study are not in tension but rather ideals that an ordinary *bhikkhu* tries to encompass in his life. Reciprocal group activities engender fraternity balanced by qualities of desirelessness and non-attachment. Such practices are as much about the individual as they are about the group in that they also help an individual to befriend him- or herself as well as others and prepare for periods alone.

I have focused on a Buddhist monastic’s social status mainly from the internal view of fraternity and group cohesion. However, Buddhist social norms extend to society at large through the sharing of merit and preaching. Some narratives clearly depict how wider society benefits from non-violence, social order and moral relations, whilst others recognise how stages of sanctity are possible for lay followers and support renunciation later in life. These pluralistic and encompassing visions of society clearly contrast with Weber’s characterisation of the Buddhist layperson’s practice as an ‘insufficiency ethic for the weak’.²⁶⁹

In addition to this, I have highlighted more pragmatic attitudes towards Buddhist renunciation and spiritual development. There is a genuine regard for supporting renunciators at different stages of development along a gradual path. The task of learning and the routine assembly of all monastics might appear to install structure and

²⁶⁸ The various layered meanings to ‘oneness’ are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 and 3.

²⁶⁹ Max Weber, *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*. Translated by Hans H Gerth and Don Martindale (London: Collier-MacMillan, 1967), p. 215. Weber postulated that the layperson follows a lesser religious way consisting of devotion and providing material support to the more superior monastic *Saṅgha* who emulate the Buddha.

organisation of the ordinary social world, but they also connect individuals with trusted sources of companionship. Whilst most monastic rules were added later to account for the diversity and foibles of the growing community, the value of simple, rarefied forest communities is recognised in canonical texts. This genuine regard for both pragmatism and pluralism in early Buddhist texts opposes the Weberian historicist theory that presents cultural manifestations of Buddhist societies as a ‘degeneration’ of an ‘original’ form of ascetic Buddhism taught by the Buddha.²⁷⁰

However, monastic social values are also based on exclusive celibate relations where the need for companionship is gradually transcended through increasing mental purification and self-reliance. These qualities are maintained in attitudes towards practice that require a *bhikkhu* to attune his mind towards non-worldly forms of happiness that buoys him forward on his path increasingly independent of others. Whilst the ideal *ārāma* presents a social setting interconnected to society at large, the ideals of the quiet simplicity of the forest are also preserved. The importance of physical seclusion in the renouncer’s path is reflected in the *cakkavatin*’s social utopia which preserves the separate lifestyle of celibate renouncers alongside the good and happy life of the masses. Along with the inclusion of the renouncer in this ‘ideal society’ is a recognition that their preferred habitat is the forest and other secluded places in the landscape.

The importance of seclusion becomes more apparent in narratives that warn of the dangers of close living, association and company as a source of pleasure instead of meditation. The forest and other secluded places are presented as a paradigm for regular and repeated physical seclusion and the pursuit of non-worldly forms of delight. Whilst these examples do not repudiate communal life, they suggest that living in a group does not always provide the optimum conditions and sometimes appears in tension with religious goals. Thus, *dukkha* as the first noble truth sometimes manifests plainly for a *bhikkhu* living in a crowded monastery. In accordance with the second truth, a *bhikkhu* must continue to recognise craving as the deep-seated cause of *dukkha* and therefore regularly withdraw from the crowd as a potential source of unskillful desire.

Forest withdrawal, seen in terms of repeated periods of meditative quiet alone from others, is coextensive with that which develops and sustains desirelessness, simplicity and contentment. This principle is evident in images of ‘going forth’ into wandering forest communities and living in small, quiet hermitages which speak of

²⁷⁰ Here, I follow Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 56.

sustained efforts towards abandoning the desire of ordinary 'society'. The ideal of forest-dwelling need not be limited to inspiring more rigorous ascetic approaches. I have suggested that it also pertains to the repeated and regular practice of seclusion as part of community life. Both the ascetic and mainstream approaches speak of a continuous renunciation or sustained desirelessness through a commitment to meditative effort.

Chapter 2

‘Right Solitude’ as Path and Goal

*Without having abandoned sensual desires,
a sage does not attain oneness.¹*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the extent to which solitude is expressed as part of the Buddhist path and in terms of final liberation. I will pick out key terms and trace how the notion of ‘right solitude’ — as what helps lead one along the path to the goal — is constituted, with few exceptions, within both the physical and psychological in continuum. With this continuum in mind, ‘right solitude’ can be defined as relative stages of ‘seclusion’ (or ‘separation’) and, somewhat paradoxically, ‘oneness’ or unification with more refined levels of experience along with concomitant stages of happiness.

Most scholars have tended to focus on the subject of solitude with an emphasis on the psychological domain of ‘inner singleness’ of *jhāna* whilst overlooking the finer points of physical separation. Physical seclusion has a fundamental role as a preliminary stage to mental seclusion. I will discuss the extent to which three formulaic expressions of physical seclusion recur in the canon and discuss their importance. Stepping away from the crowd has a remedial effect of withdrawing the senses from the most obvious and distracting objects. I will attempt to show how, especially through imagery, the Pāli *nikāyas* articulate the more fundamental therapeutic benefits of physical withdrawal. In light of this analysis, I will argue that a salient feature of the Buddhist path, as described in some significant Buddhist texts, is its prescription for physical withdrawal — typically to the forest but also other ‘empty places’.

Although there seems to be no significant previous study in relation to my aims, I should add that I have benefited from previous comprehensive scholarly analyses on the Buddhist path and particularly, the role of *jhāna* in Buddhist meditation. Such studies have greatly illuminated our understanding of how the compilers of the *nikāyas* wished to present the Buddhist path and the complexities of Buddhist meditation. However, my

¹ S I 49, 9. Translation adapted from Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p. 143.

focus will be to illuminate the richness and nuance of the various terms related to solitude as both physical and mental which, hitherto, remains incomplete. As such, I will also investigate how abstract notions of solitariness take on more expansive figurative meanings in advanced stages of the path and how it defines the *arahat* and his/her experience of happiness as essentially non-social.

2.2 Meditation as path development

The fourth noble truth — the path to the cessation of suffering — is formally presented as the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*), comprising eight path factors.² Sometimes, the eight path factors are presented as a sequence contained within broader categories or *khandhas* — virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*) with an implied hierarchy.³ Whilst each factor within these categories has as its goal the removal of lust, hatred and delusion,⁴ no single category is sufficient to attain full liberation.⁵ Thus, whilst implying a sequence, individual factors are developed by way of inter-relationship⁶ to gradually cultivate wholesome spiritual qualities whilst stilling and eradicating unwholesome ones. As such, the path *in toto* can be conceived as seclusion in its most complete sense.⁷ My focus is how seclusion functions as part of the meditative process related to aspects of *samādhi* and *paññā*. However, it is important to recognise how these are supported by and give support to other factors, whilst bearing in mind that individual factors are necessary but alone are insufficient. The principles of mutual support and perfection applies to the most comprehensive treatment of the path

² Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Striving, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

³ See the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta: sīla* (Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood), *samādhi* (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration) and *paññā* (Right View and Right Thought), M I 301, 6-11.

⁴ S V 5-6.

⁵ The *Mahā-Assapura-sutta* gives a partial view of the classic scheme where the emphasis is on accumulating and developing individual stages suggesting that all the stages, up to the four *jhānas*, are necessary conditions of the path. Each by itself is insufficient but develops on its previous stages, M I 271-80.

⁶ Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, pp. 208-10.

⁷ Gethin has shown how the *ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga* subsumes all other practice and is both the path and goal. Conceived according to *Abhidhamma* understanding of dynamic *dharmas* in flux at any one moment in time, Gethin explains that the factors that make up *ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga* reflect how the mind is orientated at any one moment in time, i.e. as a ‘path’. The *Buddhist Path to Awakening*, pp. 207 and 215-16.

as thirty-seven factors that contribute to awakening (*bodhipakkhiya dhammas*).⁸ Most factors recur several times across seven smaller sets with the most frequent clearly significant to meditation.⁹

The importance of meditation (*bhāvanā*)¹⁰ is stressed throughout canonical passages. A mind that is cultivated is workable and leads to great good and happiness.¹¹ According to the *Mahāsaḷāyatānika-sutta*, suffering is said to be rooted not only in craving, but also in a lack of insight into the conditioned nature of the six sense spheres (*āyatana*s). Here, the Four Noble Truths are formulated firstly: as what should be understood, secondly, what should be abandoned, thirdly, what should be developed and fourthly, what should be realised. Notably, having reversed the traditional order of the third and fourth noble truths, the *sutta* then represents the third noble truth as calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*)¹² which, elsewhere, collectively comprise the path to the unconditioned.¹³

The terms *samatha* and *vipassanā* refer to two quite different qualities working together to achieve liberation.¹⁴ *Samatha* calms the mind and promotes wholesome states whilst limiting and weakening the ‘five hindrances’ to meditation (*nīvaraṇas*), which are considered the nutriment for ignorance.¹⁵ *Vipassanā* leads to the abandonment of

⁸ Gethin, *The Buddha’s Path to Awakening*, p. 352.

⁹ Across the seven sets, energy (*virīya*) occurs nine times, mindfulness (*sati*) eight times, wisdom (*paññā*) five times, concentration (*samādhi*) four times, confidence (*saddhā*) appears twice and several individual factors once. See Vism, 680-81, summarised by Gethin, *The Buddha’s Path to Awakening*, pp. 304-05.

¹⁰ There is no single equivalent Pāli term for the English word ‘meditation’ since *jhāna* can also be used in a more general sense of the term. *Bhāvanā* is probably the most apt and is derived from *bhāveti* meaning ‘to cultivate’ or ‘to produce’ but also more simply, ‘to practice’. See Vajirañāṇa Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1975), pp. 25-27.

¹¹ A I 5-6.

¹² ‘And what things should be developed by direct knowledge? Serenity and insight’, M III 289, 28-30. Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 1139.

¹³ E.g. S IV 360, 6-8.

¹⁴ Although some scholars have perceived a tension in the canon between the two approaches only to be patched over by later texts, others have suggested that any tension is not indicative of opposing views of the path, Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, p. 201. A helpful way of seeing the inter-related relationship of *samatha* and *vipassanā* as fundamental to the path is, as Peter Harvey suggests, how they collectively address affective and cognitive dimensions of mind which are both implicated in the arising of suffering, *Introduction to Buddhism 2nd edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 324.

¹⁵ A V 113, 5-6.

ignorance whilst both *samatha* and *vipassanā* are required for *paññā*.¹⁶ *Samatha* and *samādhi* are closely linked since it is the former that leads to a state of firm concentration on a single object¹⁷ that is present in each of the four *jhānas*¹⁸ and constitutes Right Concentration.¹⁹ *Samādhi* is what is needed to ‘see things as they really are’ (*yathābhūtaṃ*)²⁰ as, indeed is seclusion (*paṭisallāna*).²¹ Hence, the practice of meditation involves both *samādhi* and *paññā*, but it is *samatha/samādhi* and their relative stages of happiness that naturally govern most attention with regards to solitude.

Meditation can also be understood as a process of purifying the mind of acquired defilements that ‘conceal’ its natural ‘radiant’ state, leading to greater fulfilment and wisdom.²² During the progressive stages of *samādhi*, the meditator begins to experience the depths of the mind’s naked luminosity.²³ As the mind becomes gradually isolated from mental defilements that conceal its radiance and experiences a more unified awareness of the meditation object, it experiences more subtle forms of non-sensory happiness. Indeed, each of the four *jhānas* as stages of *samādhi* are considered ‘*nibbāna* with qualification’ in that they gradually prepare the mind for crucial insights required for liberation.²⁴ The experiences of each of the four *jhānas* and formless attainments are singular psychological ‘realms’ that trace a cosmological journey and permit calm

¹⁶ A I 61, 5-14.

¹⁷ *samādhi* is fixed concentration or unification of the mind on a single object (*cittassa’ekagattā*), M I 301, 13.

¹⁸ S V 196, 18-19. As we shall see below, the later tradition also includes states prior to *jhāna* as *samādhi*.

¹⁹ S V 10, 4-17.

²⁰ S III 13-14.

²¹ S III 15, 20-21. See Bhikkhu Bodhi’s note that *paṭisallāna*, here, refers to *kāyaviveka*, *Connected Discourses*, p. 1050, n. 31.

²² ‘Luminous (*pabhassara*), bhikkhus, is this mind and it is defiled by adventitious (*āgantuka*) defilements...luminous, bhikkhus...is this mind, and it is freed from adventitious defilements.’ A I 10, 10-15. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, p. 97.

²³ For the later Theravāda tradition, the mind’s radiant ‘natural state’ (*pakatimāna*) is seen as the *bhavaṅgacitta*. E.g. at Dh-p-a I 23, 12: *pakatimāno hi bhavaṅgacittaṃ, taṃ apaduṭṭhaṃ*. The *bhavaṅgacitta* is the resting mode of mind that rapidly flickers in and out in waking consciousness but is uninterrupted in dreamless sleep. Bhikkhu Bodhi, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma - The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1993), p. 123.

²⁴ A IV 454, 8-14. That is, in each *jhāna*, the process by which the mind enters *jhāna* is analogous to the process by which it becomes orientated towards *nibbāna*. Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p. 172.

inquiry into the nature of self.²⁵ When a permanent self cannot be found even in the most subtle realms of experience, wisdom is expanded.

2.3 *Sīla, saddhā, viriya*

Seclusion — broadly, the process of stilling and quietening the mind through meditation — is most relevant to the *samādhi* and *paññā khandhas* of the Noble Eightfold Path. Before I examine how seclusion is envisaged in relation to these, I will turn to briefly examine how three qualities in particular work as both preliminary and supporting conditions to seclusion.

Virtue, or *sīla*, restrains expressions of unwholesome mental states and acts as a good basis for meditative effort. Through a gradual and careful training in *sīla*,²⁶ a *bhikkhu* gains a maturity in monastic conduct and restraint that precede the important individual work of meditation.²⁷ Indeed, *sīla* is the basis for seven meditative qualities or enlightenment factors (*bhojjaṅgas*).²⁸ We can, nevertheless, also note how meditation also strengthens *sīla*. Meditative calm helps to still lust states whilst insight extinguishes ignorance and cultivates understanding.²⁹ Virtue orientates conduct aided by mindfulness of bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions. Virtue supports sense restraint, greater calm and further weakening of unwholesome thoughts. One gains greater clarity on how the mind works leading to further insights. Virtue also conditions emotional uplift and crucial wholesome states inherent to the process of seclusion and meditative attainments.³⁰

²⁵ Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, p. 115-18.

²⁶ This is vividly illustrated by a passage that compares the perfection of virtue to a chariot wheel that takes six months to craft. Unlike a wheel that takes only six weeks to make, the former has no crookedness, defects or faults and rolls as far as its impetus carries it before it stands perfectly still, ready to be fixed to its axle. A I 112-13.

²⁷ See below for a summary of the description of the ‘gradual path’.

²⁸ S V 63-67. The seven enlightenment factors are mindfulness, (*sati*), *Dhamma*-investigation, (*dhammavicaya*), effort/energy (*viriyā*), joy (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), *samādhi*, equanimity (*upekkhā*).

²⁹ A I 61, 6-8.

³⁰ Virtue leads to non-remorse, which leads to delight (*pāmuḍḍa*) which leads to joy (*pīti*) which leads to happiness (*sukha*), this leads to *samādhi*, to knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana*), to disenchantment (*nibbidā*) and dispassion (*virāga*), which leads to knowledge and vision of freedom (*vimutti-ñāṇadassana*), A V 1-2.

Like *sīla*, *saddhā* or confidence³¹ is also closely associated with felicitous states, which condition meditative concentration and insight.³² As well as its external focus on the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Saṅgha*,³³ *saddhā* also entails trust in one's own practice and includes a degree of self-reliance. Using a simile from the *Milindapañha* of how a fit man is not only able to leap across a flooded river himself but also inspires others to cross over safely as well, Rupert Gethin points out how *saddhā* has the characteristic of 'leaping forward' (*sampakkhandana*) as in initiating religious activity.³⁴ We could say that *saddhā*, includes an element of individually 'taking the plunge'. Despite the irony in this turn of phrase, it seems apt for how we might understand the simile in terms of those who follow, as an act of *saddhā*, the Buddha's example of physical seclusion.³⁵

Effort, or *virīya*, is the application of meditative energy through restraining and removing unwholesome states on one hand and arousing and maintaining wholesome states on the other.³⁶ With energy aroused, one lives happily secluded from unwholesome states and achieves great welfare.³⁷ A diligent *bhikkhu* becomes increasingly reliant on his own efforts. By sustaining his practice of seclusion day and night, he is buoyed by non-worldly forms of bliss.³⁸ By initiating energy (*viriyārambha*), a *bhikkhu* dwells committed to the above principles.³⁹

According to the *Udāna* commentary, *viriyārambha* is said to be both physical and mental.⁴⁰ A similar division between physical and mental effort is made in a

³¹ Confidence and energy are two of the five 'faculties' *indriyas* at D III 239. The same factors are listed together as 'powers' or *balas*. Gethin has shown that the difference between *indriyas* and *balas* is subtle. Whilst an *indriya* has an active function, a *bala* is passive in that, as a result of its power, it is impossible to overcome by an opposing force. *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p. 142.

³² *Saddhā* is the proximate cause for *pāmuja* (delight) which is the proximate cause of *pīti*, S II 30-31. *Pīti* is one of the mental factors present in the first and second *jhāna* (see below).

³³ E.g. at D III 93, 26-35.

³⁴ Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p. 114.

³⁵ M I 23, 32-36. That is, how the Buddha's example inspires others to actively withdraw into seclusion and seek a pleasant dwelling for themselves, as he does for himself. Cf. Th 538.

³⁶ A I 296-97 and implied in the formula for the four right endeavours (*samma-ppadhāna*) at S V 196, 13-14.

³⁷ S II 29, 3-5: *āradhāviriyo ca kho bhikkhave sukhaṃ viharati pavivitto pāpakehi akusalehi dhammehi mahantaṅ ca sadattham paripūreti.*

³⁸ S V 398, 28-29: *uttarim vāyamati divā pavivekāya rattim paṭisallāṇāya.*

³⁹ Ud, 20-22.

⁴⁰ Ud-a 232-33: *vīriyaṅ ca vata akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya, kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ uppādāya ārambhanam ārambho. svāyaṃ kāyiko cetasiko cā ti duvidho.*

commentarial explanation to those who ‘put forth energy’, *āradhāvīriyā*.⁴¹ According to the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*, physical energy entails abandoning physical association (*kāyasaṅgaṇika*) and staying alone (*ekaka*) in all four postures and eight grounds for initiating energy. Mental energy entails stopping mental association (*cittasaṅgaṇika*) by abandoning afflictions (*kilesas*) in all four postures and abiding ‘alone/single’ (*ekaka*) in the eight attainments, which are the four *jhānas* and four formless attainments (see below).⁴² This division of physical and psychological energy is germane to our understanding of the nature of seclusion seen in terms of a process of simplification of experience supported by gradual stages of *samādhi*. In the following, I will examine how the division between the physical and mental is inherent in two important expressions related to an understating of ‘right solitude’.

2.4 vūpakāṭṭha and paṭisallāna

The term *vūpakāsa*, or ‘withdrawal’, commonly appears in a stock phrase *eko vūpakāṭṭho* (‘alone, withdrawn’) that typically describes the final stages of the path to arahatship.⁴³ Both physical and mental withdrawal (*kāya-* and *cittavūpakāsa*) are conditions for the development of enlightenment factors (*bojjhaṅgas*).⁴⁴ Their relationship appears most prominently in a series of similes in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*. Just as wet wood lying on dry land is equally useless for lighting a fire as wood that is immersed in water, so too, those who live physically withdrawn from sense pleasures but not mentally withdrawn from their effects and those who are neither physically nor mentally withdrawn, are equally incapable of reaching the goal. Those who are capable are both physically and mentally withdrawn, just like only dry wood is capable of kindling fire because it is kept

⁴¹ Listed in the *Mahāparinibāna-sutta* as one of seven conditions of ‘welfare’ (*aparihāniya*), D II 79, 1.

⁴² Sv II 530, 9-17: *āradhāvīriyā ti yesaṃ kāyikaṅ ca cetasikaṅ ca vīriyaṃ āradhamaṃ hoti. tattha ye kāyasaṅgaṇikaṃ vinodetvā catūsu iriyāpathesu aṭṭha-ārabbha-vatthu vasena ekakā honti, tesam kāyikavīriyaṃ āradhamaṃ nāma hoti. ye cittasaṅgaṇikaṃ vinodetvā aṭṭhasamāpattivāsena ekakā honti, gamane uppannakilesassa thānaṃ pāpuṇiṭuṃ na denti, thāne uppannakilesassa nisajjaṃ, nisajjāya uppannakilesassa sayanaṃ pāpuṇiṭuṃ na denti, uppannuppannaṭṭhāneyeva kilese niggaṇhanti, tesam cetasikavīriyaṃ āradhamaṃ nāma hoti.* See Yang-Gyu An, *The Buddha’s Last Days*, p. 36

⁴³ E.g. at D I 177, 2. See later.

⁴⁴ S V 67-72. The list expands on an earlier arrangement in the *Dasuttara-sutta* at D III 285-86. See also A III 151-55.

dry and far from water.⁴⁵ The same principle is illustrated in a *sutta* that compares a *bhikkhu* who is physically withdrawn (*vūpakaṭṭha*) to a secluded place but without proper training to one who does the same but is lax in monastic discipline.⁴⁶ What is notable from the above passages is a clear notion of ‘right solitude’, in the four primary *nikāyas*,⁴⁷ predicated on physical withdrawal.

Although not explicitly classified as mental and physical in the *nikāyas*, a similar division is inherent in the term *paṭisallāna*, or ‘seclusion’. The term *paṭisallāna* is derived from the Sanskrit *saṃ-√lī*, meaning to ‘sit’ or ‘lie-down’,⁴⁸ from which we get the association with ‘retreat’ or ‘meditation’.⁴⁹ The psychological aspects are made more apparent in the commentary to the *Majjhima Nikāya* which glosses *paṭisallāna* as ‘lying down’ or ‘hiding’ (*sallāna*)⁵⁰ the mind away from undesirable objects and ‘settling down’ (*nilīyana*) as in calming.⁵¹ How *paṭisallāna* relates to both meditative attainment and physical seclusion is clearly described in the following:

Bhikkhus, abide taking pleasure in *paṭisallāna*, delighting in *paṭisallāna*, apply yourself inwardly to mental calm, not neglecting the *jhānas*, endowed with insight; devote yourself to empty places.⁵²

Mental and physical seclusion, as inherent to the *samādhi khandha*, is indicated in a passage which includes *paṭisallāna* in a list of seven qualities describing one who is

⁴⁵ M I 240-42.

⁴⁶ M I 440-41.

⁴⁷ I cannot find a formal classification between physical and mental *vūpakaṭṭha/vūpakāsa* in K where we find it as a gloss of *kāyaviveka* but not *cittaviveka*, Nidd I 27, 33-34. See below.

⁴⁸ MW q.v. *saṃ-lī*.

⁴⁹ As suggested in a common phrase in the *nikāyas* illustrating private reflection: ‘while alone in seclusion, a thought arose in his mind’. My translation of D II 30, 14-15: *rahogatassa paṭisallīnassa evaṃ cetaso parivattakko udapādi*.

⁵⁰ As Richard Salomon notes in his translation and study of the Gāndhārī version of the Rhinoceros horn *Sūtra*, the use of *sallāna* is rare in Pāli texts. It is more commonly found with a negative prefix and in the participle form *asallīna*, ‘activated’ or ‘aroused’, i.e. in the opposite sense to ‘hiding away’. *A Gāndhārī Version of the Rhinoceros Sūtra* (Seattle: University of Washington, 2000), p. 157. An example is the phrase ‘energy was aroused (*asallīna*) in me...’, M I 21, 31-33.

⁵¹ ‘*paṭi-sallāna*’ means ‘hiding’, in the sense of ‘settling down’, having turned ‘away’ from the whole variety of living beings and conditioned things.’ My translation of Ps I 180, 12-13: *paṭisallānan ti tehi tehi sattasaṅkhārehi paṭinivattitvā sallānaṃ nilīyanaṃ*.

⁵² My translation of It 39, 9-15: *paṭisallānārāmānaṃ bhikkhave viharataṃ paṭisallānaratānaṃ ajjhataṃ cetosamathamanyuttānaṃ anirākatajjhānānaṃ vipassanāya samannāgatānaṃ brūhetānaṃ suññāgāraṇaṃ*.

likely to attain liberation. He/she is confident, virtuous, learned, secluded, energetic, mindful and wise.⁵³ *Paṭisallāna* appears fourth in this list balancing qualities that lay the groundwork of virtuous monastic life with three qualities found in the seven sets of awakening factors pertaining to meditation. The above seven qualities roughly map onto the basic division of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* reflected by the Noble Eightfold Path. Here, I include *paṭisallāna* and *virīya* under the *samādhi* division along with the implications of their mental and physical aspects. With mindfulness involving both *samādhi* and *paññā* aspects, we can trace a shift in the emphasis in the training from practices involving both bodily and mental effort to what is essentially focussed on mental cultivation.

So far, I have tried to justify the emphasis on meditation as central to the fourth noble truth. I have also introduced how *samatha* — the meditative quality of calm/stillness — is predicated on a skilful practical aspect that can be included in our understanding of the process of *samādhi*, where my focus now shifts. In the following, I aim to show how physical and mental energies work together in *samādhi* though an exposition of the term *viveka*, or seclusion, that appears throughout the *nikāyas* as part of the gradual step-by-step path. In the following, I will explore *viveka* as stages of seclusion that simplify experience leading to *samādhi* and *paññā* and concomitant states of well-being.

2.5 Samādhi, viveka and the gradual path

The gradual path scheme is found in the *sīlakkhandavagga* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* and appears first in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*.⁵⁴ With the appearance of a *Tathāgata* in the world, a householder hears a teaching of the *Dhamma*. He/she goes forth into monastic life and lives on the basis of virtue, restraint and mindfulness. He/she finds a secluded place away from others to sit down and meditate. By means of their seclusion, he /she temporarily overcomes five hindrances to meditation and attains the four *jhānas*. From the fourth *jhāna*, he/she acquires wisdom into the nature of their body, various powers culminating in knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavas*) and with it,

⁵³ *bhikkhu saddho hoti, sīlavā hoti, bahussuto hoti, paṭisallīno hoti, āradhāviriyo hoti, satimā hoti, paññavā hoti*, A IV 85, 4-9.

⁵⁴ D I 47-86.

experiential knowledge of the four noble truths and final awakening.⁵⁵ The *sīlakkhandavagga* gradual scheme is essentially a hierarchy of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* stages⁵⁶ where notably, *samādhi* includes both physical and mental seclusion.

2.5.1 (pa)viveka

In the gradual path set out in the *sīlakkhandavagga* of the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, *viveka* is expressed initially in a formula for seated meditation and takes the form of a list of nine places:

he... resorts to a secluded (*vivitta*) lodging: the forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a cave, a hillside hollow, a cremation ground, a place deep in the woods, an open space, a pile of straw...he sits down with legs crossed, keeping his body straight and establishes mindfulness in front of him.⁵⁷

For purposes of later comparison, I label this passage the *Sāmaññaphala* formula for physical seclusion since the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* is the first *sutta* in which it occurs. What is quite interesting about this formula is not just its depiction of real places in nature and landscape but also the diversity of the locations, notably, places that would only be frequented by the hardest of ascetics. The *Dīgha Nikāya* from which the *Sāmaññaphala* formula appears first contains important dialogues with rival ascetics, kings and non-Buddhist interlocutors. The *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, like many other *suttas* in this collection, is famous for its narrative tension that precedes a stage-by-stage teaching of

⁵⁵ Gethin summarises the *Sāmaññaphala* scheme as a series of twenty steps: 1. the appearance of a *Tathāgata*, 2. renunciation, 3. moral virtue, 4. guarding the sense doors, 5. living mindfully and fully aware, 6. contentment in monastic life, 7. retirement to a secluded place, 8. abandoning the five hindrances, 9-12. attainment of each of the four *jhānas*, 13. understanding how consciousness depends on the four elements, 14. producing a mind-made body, 15. powers (*iddhis*), 16. the divine ear, 17. the knowledge of others' minds, 18. knowledge of his previous lives, 19. knowledge of the birth and death of beings in accordance with their actions and 20. knowledge of the destruction of defilements. 'Schemes of the Buddhist Path in the Nikāyas and Āgamas', in *Mārga: Paths to Liberation in South Asian Buddhist Traditions*, ed. by C. Pecchia and V. Eltschinger (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2020), pp. 5-77 (pp. 15-17).

⁵⁶ Unlike the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, the division of the path in terms of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* is explicitly identified in the *Subha-sutta*, (D I 206, 8-14). *Sīla* maps onto steps 1, 2 and 3 in Gethin's series of twenty steps. *Samādhi* is steps 4 to 12 and *paññā* is steps 13-20.

⁵⁷ My translation of D I 71, 11-19: *so... vivittaṃ senāsanaṃ bhajati, araññaṃ rukkhamaṃ pabbataṃ kandaraṃ giriguhaṃ susānaṃ vanapatthaṃ abbhokāsaṃ palālapuñjaṃ. so...nisīdati pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā ujum kāyaṃ pañidhāya parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā.*

the gradual path from the Buddha.⁵⁸ These passages are considered key in attracting followers by establishing the superiority of both the Buddha as a teacher and also the way of life and success of his followers. I will return to compare this formula with other descriptions of physical seclusion and discuss its impact on how different textual sources transmit concepts of solitude within a single genre of Pāli literature.

By means of his physical separation, a *bhikkhu*'s concentration develops, and he undergoes deepening stages of mental seclusion leading to temporary 'separation' from five unwholesome mental factors or hindrances:

Completely secluded (*vivicca*) from sense desires and unwholesome qualities, he attains and abides in the first *jhāna* which is joy and happiness accompanied by applied thought and examining thought, born of seclusion.⁵⁹

Viveka is derived from the verb *vi* + *√vic* 'to separate' or to seclude', involving a process of thoughtful discrimination evoked by the agricultural image of 'sifting'.⁶⁰ Sometimes we find the prefixed term *paviveka* which, like *paṭisallāna*, assumes dual physical and mental dimensions but often reflecting a deeper sense of 'separation'. For example, *paviveka* is employed to contrast seclusion with the delight of company.⁶¹ Here, *paviveka* not only describes dwelling away from the crowd, but also presupposes an awareness of the delight of renunciation (*nekkhamābhira*).⁶² Elsewhere, *paviveka* describes the intensified asceticism of other *paribbājakas* that includes a purely physical kind of seclusion.⁶³ By contrast, the Buddha teaches three fulfilling kinds of *paviveka*: seclusion from immoral mental states, from wrong view and from the taints. The lack of

⁵⁸ See also the *Brahmajāla-sutta* (D I 1-46, *Tevijja-sutta* (D I 235-52 and the *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta* (D III 36-98), with the latter being mentioned in Chapter 1 and also in section 2.5.4 below.

⁵⁹ D II 73, 22-25: *so vivicc'eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ paṭhamajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati*. Translation adapted from Gethin, *Sayings of the Buddha*, p. 28.

⁶⁰ MW s.v. *vic*.

⁶¹ A IV 233, 26-27: *pavivittassāyaṃ bhikkhave dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo saṅgaṇikārāmassā ti*.

⁶² In the *Rathavinīta-sutta*, *paviveka* is listed as one of eleven qualities in between contentment (*santuṭṭhi*) and non-association (*asamsagga*). This suggests that *paviveka* builds on mental factors that help steer the mind away from worldly sources of delight, M I 145, 21-23.

⁶³ The description of the other wanderers' physical seclusion evokes the *Sāmaññaphala* formula mentioned in the gradual path scheme but adds a 'chaff house' (*bhusāgāra*), A I 241, 11-13. The other two kinds of seclusion of the other wanderers are seclusion of robes (*cīvarapaviveka*) and of alms food (*piṇḍapātapaviveka*). cf. M I 77, 26-27 on the Bodhisatta's own practice of physical austerity.

physical seclusion in the Buddha's answer need not exclude the importance of physical seclusion in practice. The point appears to be, as encountered elsewhere in the *suttas*, a critique of practices that focus only on 'outer' expressions of asceticism and, as we explored in Chapter 1, to distinguish the Buddha's teaching as the only one that is completely fulfilling. This approach is illustrated in the passage with a simile which compares one who has attained 'to the pith' to the foremost kind of rice which has been first cut from its plants, threshed and had its straw and chaff removed.⁶⁴

It seems appropriate to refer to both *paviveka* and *viveka* as 'seclusion'. Whilst *viveka* can refer to physical and mental seclusion separately, *paviveka* also does this but with a greater degree of emphasis. Elsewhere, *paviveka* is used to highlight the presence of spiritual joy (*pīti*) in the first two *jhānas* without explicit reference to physical seclusion.⁶⁵ This passage, whilst suggesting the importance mental seclusion, is found among a list of values and practices that distinguish the Buddha's most esteemed followers.⁶⁶ However, the same list is applied to the *arahat* Mahā Kassapa, who is well known for his solitary life.⁶⁷ Therefore, whilst *viveka* appears to apply to stages of physical and mental seclusion that establish *samādhi*, *paviveka* appears to integrate these dimensions as a single concept.⁶⁸

The notion of *viveka* as separate but linked stages is enhanced in exegetical literature. In a relatively late canonical text called the *Mahāniddeśa*⁶⁹ *viveka* is defined as three forms: seclusion of body (*kāyaviveka*), of mind (*cittaviveka*) and of 'substrate', (*upādhiviveka*)⁷⁰ with the last relating to the permanent destruction of all mental

⁶⁴ A I 241-42.

⁶⁵ M II 235, 8-18.

⁶⁶ M I 145, 8-19. 'He has few wishes, is content, secluded (*pavivitta*), aloof from society (*asaṃsaṭṭha asaṃsagga*), energetic, attained to virtue, attained to concentration, attained to wisdom, attained to deliverance and attained to knowledge-and-vision.'

⁶⁷ M I 214, 6-16.

⁶⁸ In some cases, the choice of *paviveka* over *viveka* may be for metrical reasons. That is, to preserve the *śloka* of eight syllables in each half verse, e.g. at Sn 257:

*pavivekarasam pītvā rasaṃ upasamassa ca
niddaro hoti nippāpo dhammapitirasam pivan ti.*

⁶⁹ Found in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*. According to K. R. Norman, the *Niddeśa* may have been compiled as early as the third century B.C. See *Pāli Literature including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of all the Hīnayāna Schools of Buddhism. A History of Indian Literature Vol II/2* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), p. 86.

⁷⁰ Nidd I 26, 23-24 (Ee) or Nidd I 19-20 (Ne), commenting on Sn 772.

afflictions in a fully liberated mind.⁷¹ In addition to these three kinds, the *Visuddhimagga* refers to the suspension of the five hindrances as seclusion by suppression (*vikkhambhaṇaviveka*).⁷² A fifth kind that is seclusion by cutting off (*samucchedaviveka*) characterised by wisdom, marking a transition to the transcendent path that leads to the lasting separation from all unwholesome states.⁷³ In this connection, we can understand *viveka* in terms of gradually deepening stages of religious practice and attainment. First, one physically steps away (*kāyaviveka*) from the obvious obstacles to mental calm. The mind becomes gradually stilled and emptied (*cittaviveka*) through a stag-by-stage process of calming and temporary suspension of unwholesome mental states. Through sustained purification, the mind attains a lasting state of seclusion (*upādhiviveka*) from all that tarnishes and obscures its natural radiance.

2.5.2 kāyaviveka

The *Mahāniddeśa* description of *kāyaviveka* maps directly to the stage of sitting practice that precedes the abandoning of the hindrances in the gradual path. As such, the principal value of *kāyaviveka* clearly relates to removing the presence of obvious causes of distraction and stress and by mitigating against their immediate impacts. Yet we can also discern from the *suttas* how *kāyaviveka* itself also presupposes skilful mental states aimed at or associated with easing suffering. As such, I will attempt to trace how the value of *kāyaviveka* goes further than its immediate description as a convenient place to sit in meditation that a cursory reading of this stage of the path might suggest.

The *Mahāniddeśa* defines *kāyaviveka* by first repeating the *Sāmaññaphala* formula and then elaborating how, by living physically secluded, a *bhikkhu* is literally ‘one’ (*eka*), i.e. ‘alone’ or ‘single’, in all manner of postures, practice and behaviour.⁷⁴

⁷¹ *upādhiviveka* can also be regarded as ‘seclusion from the bases of clinging’, if we take *upādhi* in relation to *upādāna* as in the five *upādāna-kkandhas*.

⁷² *Vism* 141, 14.

⁷³ Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p. 49. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (*Paṭis* II 219-24) includes the latter two types within a further classification of five kinds of *viveka* with no mention of *kāyaviveka*: 1. seclusion by displacement (*tad-aṅga*), 2. by suppression (*vikkhambhaṇa*), 3. by cutting off (*samuccheda*), 4. by tranquillisation (*paṭipassaddhi*) and 5. by relinquishing (*nissaraṇa*). See Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p. 166.

⁷⁴ ‘He goes alone, stands alone, sits alone, sleeps alone, enters the village for alms alone, leaves alone, sits alone privately, practises walking alone; he lives, dwells, behaves, fares, maintains himself and keeps going alone’. My translation of *Nidd* I 145, 22-26 (Ee): *so eko gacchati, eko tiṭṭhati, eko nisīdati, eko seyyaṃ kappeti, eko gāmaṃ piṇḍāya pavisati, eko paṭikkamati, eko*

Although the primary meaning here is literal, a *bhikkhu* is not expected to live physically ‘alone’ in perpetuity as a hermit. I will discuss later how the term *eka* is expansive including metaphorical and symbolic meanings. It is worthwhile noting that ‘lying alone’ (*ekasayya*) and celibacy (*brahmacariya*) appear synonymous.⁷⁵ However, the commentary appears to define *ekasayya* as a metonym for maintaining seclusion in all four postures whilst *brahmacariya* is explained separately as abstinence from sexual relations.⁷⁶ What is clearly at play in the *Niddesa* is how, even at the literal level, solitude has a ‘right’ application and as such, is given a metaphorical twist pointing to an element of mental purity.

Something of the skilful attitude towards ‘living alone’ appears to be foreshadowed by poetic descriptions of literal locations for meditation. Although defined as, technically, everything except the village and its precincts,⁷⁷ the forest is typically singled out for its charming (*ramma*) and joyful (*pītikara*) aspects.⁷⁸ Other descriptions employ the imagery of nibbānic bliss. The foot of a tree (*rukhamūla*) is one that provides coolness and shade.⁷⁹ Attaining concentration is assisted by the cool winds atop a mountain (*pabbata*)⁸⁰ or in a cave (*guha*), where one can cool one’s body.⁸¹ Empty of people, the natural beauty of an unpopulated hillside (*giri*) provides enough pleasure to conquer a tumultuous mind.⁸² Characterised by their aesthetic simplicity and emptiness

raho nisīdati, eko caṅkamaṃ adhiṭṭhāti, eko carati, eko viharati iriyati vattati pāleti yapeti yāpeti.

⁷⁵ For example, at Ud 57, 21.

⁷⁶ ‘[*ekasayyam*]: with its sleeping without a partner; and, in this connection, he elucidates, under the heading of “sleeping”, physical separation associated with the four bodily postures... Brahmacariya that is abstinence from sexual intercourse.’ Ud-a 309, 17-22. Translation by Peter Masefield, *Udāna Commentary*, p. 778. The singling out of *ekasayya* as physical separation whilst sleeping helps to identify celibacy as separate to other forms of physical seclusion and, therefore, balances Steven Collins’ assertion that literal ‘singleness’ refers to absence of sexual relations.

⁷⁷ Vin III 46, 30-31 (also Vism 72, 12-13).

⁷⁸ E.g. at Th 538-39:

*handa eko gamissāmi araṇṇaṃ buddhavaṇṇitaṃ
phāsuṃ ekavihārissa pahitattassa bhikkhuno.
yogipītikaraṃ rammaṃ mattakuñjarasevitaṃ
eko atthavasī khippaṃ pavisissāmi kānana.*

⁷⁹ Sv I 209, 20-21: *rukhamūlan ti yaṃ kiñci sandacchāyaṃ vivittarukhamūlaṃ.*

⁸⁰ Sv I 209, 24: *sītena vātena bījīyamānassa cittaṃ ekaggaṃ hoti.*

⁸¹ Sv I 209-10: *pivivā gattāni sītāni katvā...cittaṃ ekaggaṃ hoti.*

⁸² Th 1144:

with respect to people, the description of these locations speak of alternative sources of pleasure which, crucially, refresh and ease the mind.⁸³

From the above, I would like to make three points. Firstly, *kāyaviveka* can be understood as straightforwardly describing places in the natural landscape that are relatively empty of people and thus good for quiet meditation. In other words, *kāyaviveka*, can be evoked through reference to individual places in the landscape in separate to the list described by the *Sāmaññaphala* formula and formally classified in the *Mahāniddesa*. Later, we shall see how the principle is reflected in two alternative formulae that overlap with and extend on the *Sāmaññaphala* formula. Secondly, prefiguring places in nature with terms associated with mental states attained in meditation offers a glimpse into the profits of mental seclusion. Thirdly, these delightful descriptions of places to meditate serve to remind one that ascetic ardour (*ātāpi*) not only involves calming and eradicating unwholesome states (separation from sense objects) but also includes encouraging and sustaining wholesome ones (unification with skilful states).⁸⁴ In the above examples, the wholesome in particular, has a geo-spatial referent that encourages ease and stillness of mind.

One might point out here that the attitude towards physical seclusion might, instead, be inspired and conditioned by a number of more important reasons: trust (*saddhā*) in the achievements of ascetic exemplars, a thorough training in self-discipline and conduct or an attitude of firm determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*) towards practice.⁸⁵ Yet by seeing it purely in this way, there is a tendency to focus on solitude merely in terms of one aspect of ascetic endeavour. Agreed, *kāyaviveka* involves calmly disengaging the mind from what impedes spiritual progress, but I suggest that it also involves actively embracing more spiritually fulfilling sources of happiness. The texts therefore recognise the value of withdrawal into nature, contact with the elements and a more visceral aspect of individual well-being.

*migo yathā seri sucittakānane rammaṃ giriṃ pāvīsi abbhaḷ mālinam,
anākule tattha nage ramissasi, asaṃsayam citta parābhavissasi.*

⁸³ This will be looked at in more detail in Chapter 4.

⁸⁴ A I 153, 5-20.

⁸⁵ ‘Four kinds of determination: [pertaining to] wisdom, truth, relinquishment, calm’. My translation of D III 230, 18-19: *cattaro adhiṭṭhānāni. paññādiṭṭhānam, saccādiṭṭhānam, cāgādiṭṭhāna, upasamādiṭṭhānam.*

What helps to illustrate both principles is a passage that highlights the quiet simplicity of a secluded place in nature.⁸⁶ Here, the Buddha praises some *bhikkhus* who decide to move to the quiet location of the Gosiṅga Sal Tree Wood after hearing a group of noisy laypeople approach their dwelling place.⁸⁷ Using a metaphor, the Buddha describes how delight in company is a ‘thorn’ to the delight of seclusion and how other activities that arouse the senses are also each considered ‘thorns’ to meditative life. Additional ‘thorns’ are then described as impediments to the four *jhānas*, to cessation of perception and feeling and to final awakening.⁸⁸ The imagery suggests how mental seclusion builds upon physical seclusion as progressive stages of relief from pain. The implication is that by being separated from these ‘thorns’, one is separated from the associated pain they cause so that finally one is permanently free from all suffering. What is striking is how separation from ‘delight in company’ is framed within the practical act of retreat into the woods where one dwells ‘at ease, without noise and crowds.’⁸⁹ In doing so, *kāyaviveka* is more clearly implicated in the process of abandoning *dukkha* than in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, where it is easily overlooked as simply a place to sit down and meditate.

Whilst *kāyaviveka* is not conceived in the gradual path as a ‘fruit’ or ‘enjoyment’ attributed to mental attainment, withdrawal is clearly presented as part of the continuum of *samādhi* stages in the path. In the above passage, we can identify how *kāyaviveka* upholds principles of ascetic ardour which works not just to undermine the unwholesome by separation from sense objects — but to also embrace the wholesome — by arousing pleasant states associated with the silence and simplicity of the woods. The example allows one to appreciate the value of *kāyaviveka* as a significant stage in the process of *samādhi*. Conceiving *viveka* this way, solitude can be understood not just in terms of ‘separation’, but also as ‘unification’ with accompanying wholesome mental states that are genuinely consonant with the mind’s natural radiance.

⁸⁶ According to the commentary of the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, a ‘secluded lodging’ (*vivittā senāsana*) is so called because it is devoid of people and quiet at Sv I 208, 27-28: *vivittā ti suññaṃ, appasaddaṃ, appanigghosanti attho*.

⁸⁷ A V 133-34.

⁸⁸ That is, in order of what is successively abandoned in states leading to final awakening. Thus, sound is a thorn to the first *jhāna*, sustained and examining thought are a thorn to second *jhāna*, joy is a thorn to the third *jhāna*, in-and-out breathing is a thorn to the fourth *jhāna*, perception and feeling is a thorn to the state of cessation and, finally lust, hatred and delusion are thorns to one who aims to dwell ‘thornless’ i.e. an *arahat*, A V 134-35.

⁸⁹ *tattha te āyasmanto appasaddā appakiñṇā phāsu viharan ti*, A V 134, 17-18.

What also seems clear is how withdrawal to the woods is presented as a remedy to the disquiet that sometimes exists in monastic life. *Prima facie*, the behaviour of the *bhikkhus* in the passage could be construed as an extreme, anti-social response. Whilst the description dwelling ‘at ease, without noise and crowds’ binds together *kāyaviveka* with spiritual happiness and the ‘noble silence’ associated with *cittaviveka* (see below), I suggest that it is also possible to trace a recognition of the therapeutic effects that social isolation can sometimes bring. In other words, from more formal presentations of physical withdrawal and ascetic attainment, the texts recognise the connection between the simplicity of secluded places and individual well-being. Examples like those above help us to better understand the importance of *kāyaviveka* in the path of abandoning all that is *dukkha* and finding lasting happiness.

According to the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, a *bhikkhu* practices meditation buoyed by his contentment and monastic virtue and guided by a personal conviction in the *Dhamma*. However, I have also suggested that skilful factors that orientate meditative practice can also be attributed to an understanding of the therapeutic benefits of social isolation. In the following sub-sections, I will further discuss how the remedial benefits of physical seclusion are presupposed in crucial stages of separation and unification leading to full *jhāna*.

2.5.3 Abandoning hindrances

Kāyaviveka underlies the basic premise that mental development first requires one to withdraw from what impedes ease and clarity. These mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇas*) scupper one’s focus and stifle the potential for wisdom. The *nīvaraṇas* are sense desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill will (*vyāpāda*), sleepiness and tiredness (*thīnamiddha*), agitation and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) and finally doubt (*vicikiccā*). Also referred to as mental ‘defilements’ (*upakkilesas*),⁹⁰ the five hindrances are a subset of a wider group of unwholesome mental states⁹¹ revealing the complexity of the process and the nature of the task in seeking a lasting seclusion from suffering. Abandoning the hindrances is a crucial juncture between *kāyaviveka* when the body is secluded from sense objects, and, *cittaviveka*, when the mind is temporarily calmed of distractions and experiences absorption. Lasting seclusion from the five hindrances (*samucchadaviveka*) occurs only

⁹⁰ S V 92-93.

⁹¹ The *upakkilesas* are enumerated into sixteen in total at M I 36-40. A further list of mental defilements is found at M III 157-61.

when wisdom is sufficient to allow knowledge of the noble path.⁹² Full destruction of the most deep-rooted taints (*āsavas*)⁹³ that bind one to saṃsāric existence is fully achieved at the end of the path.⁹⁴

Our understanding of the nature of *samādhi* and the meditative effects of stilling the hindrances has been the subject of great scrutiny by the Buddhist exegetical tradition and aided by modern scholarship. The practical process leading to full *jhāna* using meditation objects is also well documented.⁹⁵ A mind that is temporarily free of the five hindrances, has attained either ‘access concentration’ (*upacārasamādhi*) or full *jhāna* in absorption concentration’ (*appaṇāsamādhi*).⁹⁶ A major difference between the two forms of *samādhi* is the absence/presence of skilful mental faculties (*jhānaṅgas*)⁹⁷ that are, in turn, gradually abandoned in higher levels of *jhāna*. Lance Cousins was possibly first to notice connections between the five hindrances and mental health in his seminal study of *jhāna*.⁹⁸ A connection between emotions and the hindrances is particularly noticeable from the similes used to illustrate them in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*. Sensual desire is like being in debt, ill-will is like an illness, sleepiness and tiredness are like imprisonment, agitation and worry are like bondage and doubt is like a long treacherous journey.⁹⁹ The

⁹² Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p. 49.

⁹³ Craving for being (*bhavataṇhā*), craving for sense pleasures (*kāmatāṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*), M I 55,10-11.

⁹⁴ M I 55,15-23.

⁹⁵ The meditator chooses a meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*) such as the earth *kaṣiṇa* and apprehends a preliminary sign of the object (*parikamma-nimitta*) to settle the mind. As he develops his concentration on the preliminary sign, the meditator experiences progressive levels of joy leading to a far more purified mental image of the preliminary sign, called the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) at which stage he achieves access concentration. See Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, pp. 181-83.

⁹⁶ Vism, 126, 12-26.

⁹⁷ The five factors are: 1. applied thought (*vitakka*), 2. examining thought (*vicāra*), 3. joy (*pīti*), 4. happiness (*sukha*) and 5. one-pointedness of mind (*citass’ekagattā*). These are mentioned together as what arises in first *jhāna* at M I 294, 29-31. However, in most places, only the first four are listed, e.g. at D I 73, 23-25 and M I 441, 11-13. Lance Cousins points out that although *citass’ekagattā* is absent from most occurrences of the stock phrase for the first *jhāna*, it is implicit in the term *samādhi-ja* (‘born of concentration’). Cousins, *Buddhist Jhana*, p. 122.

⁹⁸ ‘Ill will’ is synonymous with anger, ‘agitation and worry’ appears to refer to mild depression and ‘doubt’ is linked with fear. Lance Cousins, ‘Buddhist Jhana: Its nature and attainment according to the Pali sources’, *Religion* 3 no. 2 (1973), 115-131, (p. 118).

⁹⁹ D I 71-73.

similes are effective at illustrating how certain emotions can be harassing, oppressing and associated with feelings of bitterness, regret and anxiety.¹⁰⁰

Whilst there has been a recognition that the hindrances relate more generally to negative emotions, the same studies are silent about the value of *kāyaviveka* in the same process.¹⁰¹ If the five hindrances are recognised as being indicative of one's underlying mood,¹⁰² why is *kāyaviveka* implicated as a contiguous stage to their abandonment?

Kāyaviveka is not considered the *sine qua non* for the suppression of the hindrances and other defilements. Cousins noted how skilful qualities such as 'joy' (*pīti*) can also arise from activities such as hearing or reciting *Dhamma* or worship in stages prior to access concentration.¹⁰³ Awareness of the hindrances does not necessarily imply seated meditation. The five hindrances can also be occasions to seek out a teaching.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, a teaching itself, when it is in the form of a gradual discourse, can prepare the mind, free it of hindrances and make it clear so that it is open to a teaching on the four noble truths.¹⁰⁵ One passage shows how walking meditation, usually not associated with *jhāna*, can also suspend the hindrances.¹⁰⁶ This principle suggests how preparation for *samādhi* is more encompassing and speaks more about how skilful conditions must be present in the mind for hindrances to be stilled.

Nevertheless, the normative path description of the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* underscores the importance of sitting practice as the basic approach to permanently removing hindrances. *Kāyaviveka* as a preparatory practice to meditation is also acknowledged in later meditation manuals, the most influential being the *Visuddhimagga*

¹⁰⁰ See also Nyanaponika Thera, *The Five Mental Hindrances and Their Conquest* (Kandy: BPS, 1993).

¹⁰¹ Cousins, *Buddhist Jhana*, pp. 117-18 and Rupert Gethin, 'On the Practice of Buddhist Meditation According to the Pali Nikāyas and Exegetical Sources', *Buddhismus in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 9 (2004), 201-221, (p. 202).

¹⁰² '...the hindrances are not to be understood as obstacles peculiar to the spiritual path of meditation, but rather as emotions that are generally disturbing and distracting.' Gethin, *Buddhist Meditation*, p. 208.

¹⁰³ Cousins, *Buddhist Jhana*, p. 120 and Peter Harvey, 'The Four Jhānas and their Qualities in the Pali Tradition', *Buddhist Studies Review*, No. 35 1-2 (2018), 3-27, (p. 4).

¹⁰⁴ A III 320-22.

¹⁰⁵ D I 110-11 and expressed differently at M I 379-80.

¹⁰⁶ Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna. The Direct Path to Realization* (Cambridge: Windhorse, 2008), p. 80.

of Buddhaghosa.¹⁰⁷ Here, the practice of concentration starts with sitting in a secluded space¹⁰⁸ and minimising contact to only those who are successful in their practice.¹⁰⁹ The *Vimuttimaggā* of Upatissa also notes how the forest is a place where the mind is unfettered and where concentration develops.¹¹⁰

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, some passages in the *nikāyas* illustrate the ‘lonely’ aspects of the path in two ways. Firstly, through the example of *bhikkhus* who take a more sustained approach to forest-dwelling and, secondly, by describing how the regular practice of meditation is seen to lead to greater independence from the teacher. They also appear to prescribe meditative seclusion as a more formal afternoon practice (*divāvihāra*) to be carried out after a *bhikkhu* has eaten his meal. Whilst withdrawal from the group is conceived in these ways, it is also reasonable to suggest that the regularity of its application will be especially governed by the presence of particularly harmful emotional states. These states manifest either as craving for objects of sensual pleasures or aversion — anger, hatred, depression — when those pleasures are unfulfilled.¹¹¹ We also know from the *Niddesa* definition, that ‘living alone’ pertains to living skilfully in all posture and behaviours, suggesting that key meditative practices such as mindfulness and sense restraint are constant efforts.

I also argued that religious life can also resemble society at large and how regular and repeated meditative seclusion can be understood in terms of continuous acts of

¹⁰⁷ Buddhaghosa lists forty objects of meditation (Vism 110,²²⁻²⁴) which are elaborated over eight chapters of the *Visudhimagga*: ten *kasīnas* (physical representations of a quality conducive to concentration), ten kinds of ‘unlovely’ aspects of body, ten recollections, four divine abidings, four immeasurable states, the perception of repulsiveness of food and one on the defining of the four elements.

¹⁰⁸ Vism 123, ³⁻⁴. Elsewhere, Buddhaghosa elaborates on the instruction for physical seclusion in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* as ‘a place likely to hasten his efforts in meditation’ (*parakkamajavayoggabhūmiṃ*), Vism 270, ¹⁹.

¹⁰⁹ Vism 135, ²²⁻²⁷.

¹¹⁰ Ehara, Rev. N.R.M., Soma Thera and Kheminda Thera, *The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimaggā) by the Arahat Upatissa* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication, 1st ed. 1961, reprinted 1995), p. 206. The *Vimuttimaggā* is thought to be written in the first century C.E. and preserved in Chinese (T 32.1648) in from which the above English translation is derived.

¹¹¹ The *Milindapañha* — a text that is not officially part of the *Sutta Piṭaka* — lists twenty-five things that lead to loss of mindfulness (*satisammosa*): anger, malice, hypocrisy, spite, jealousy, stinginess, deceit, treachery, obstinacy, impetuosity, arrogance, pride, conceit, indolence, dullness and lethargy, laziness, idleness, friendship with evil, material shapes, sounds, scents, flavours, tangible objects, hunger and thirst, dislike. Mil 289, ¹⁻¹⁵; see I.B. Horner, *Milinda’s Questions Vol. II* (London: PTS, 1969), pp. 115-16.

renunciation. We encountered *sutta* passages where delight in company is reproached and where crowded life in the monastery is compared to an ‘itch’ to be relieved. The point I wish to make is twofold. Firstly, it is reasonable to link the five hindrances more widely to detrimental moods and emotions that obstruct positive and healthy attitudes in ordinary life. The second point is, perhaps, obvious but is worth restating: awareness of the extent to which these states invade and prevail in the mind, aided by constant mindfulness and attention to those moods and emotions, can be considered an important guiding principle to the regularity and practice of *kāyaviveka*.

Kāyaviveka must be considered more than just a convenient place to meditate. The act of simply stepping into the forest or another quiet and empty place can itself be deemed part of the step-by-step process of progressive attenuation and simplicity that starts with one’s environment.¹¹² What I have tried to point out in addition is how *kāyaviveka* — or more specifically, withdrawal from the objects and signs of the ordinary world — can be a psychologically propitious act in itself, even prior to the stilling of the hindrances and full *jhāna*. The restorative benefits of solitude in ‘person-centred’ approaches to individual well-being, even in mundane solitary activities such as gardening, are well documented.¹¹³ Temporary periods alone, especially in nature helps to declutter the mind and encourage shifts in attention. In turn, the mind is able to incline, with gradually more sustained awareness, towards the object of attention. Calm attention to a simpler aspect of experience helps to regulate mood and stress levels.¹¹⁴ The experience of calm does not mean permanently cutting off the objects themselves. Rather — and in keeping with textual evidence that shows how meditation leads to self-reliance — it encourages frequent and more regular periods alone that facilitates temporary freedom from the mind’s more powerful emotions.

Whilst it is clear that *kāyaviveka* is a key stage in the process of *samādhi*, it is only a preliminary stage of the *samādhi khandha*. *Kāyaviveka* is part of a more expansive

¹¹² Such a process is seen more clearly in the *Cūḷasuññatā-sutta* which will be discussed below.

¹¹³ For the twentieth century poet Mary Sarton, the natural world is a guide for experience, since ‘nothing stays the same for long, not even pain.’ Mary Sarton, *Journal of a Solitude* (London: The Women’s Press, 1994), p. 23, quoted in Alberti, *Biography of Loneliness*, p. 218.

¹¹⁴ As Psychiatrist Robert Kellas notes: ‘Nature engages our peripheral senses, modulating arousal and breathing; so it helps stress management, without words, and when coping with unbearable feelings or traumatic memories.’ From ‘Getting back to our roots’, *RCPsych Insight*, Issue 1 (Autumn 2017), 1-20, (p. 16). Available online at: https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/members/rcpsych-insight-magazine/members-rcpsych-insight-magazine-issue-2.pdf?sfvrsn=748254b_2 accessed 24th November 2018.

continuum of simplification of experience through purification and unification. We are then, closer to the *Niddesa* understanding of a *bhikkhu*'s solitariness as a wholesome approach to all efforts. The extent to which a *bhikkhu* regularly takes up solitary practice can be understood by recognising *kāyaviveka* as a healthy remedial response to dominating moods and emotions. The hindrances can be considered part of a wider group of mental states that create habitual responses which in turn have a detrimental effect on human flourishing. A skilful response of course relies on other supporting factors that are cultivated throughout the path such as mindfulness and wisdom.

The relationship between solitude and emotions can be recognised in the texts when we apprehend how *kāyaviveka* and the abandonment of hindrances are contiguous stages in the gradual path. The process of abandoning unwholesome states is buoyed by states of meditative delight that arise in deepening stages of *cittaviveka*. Before we consider this further, I now turn to explore the extent to which the *Sāmaññaphala* formula and other expressions of *kāyaviveka* outside the *sīlakkhandavagga* recur to reveal a fuller picture of physical seclusion in the Pāli Canon.

2.5.4 Four schemes and three formulae

In a recent in-depth study, Gethin identifies several variations to the gradual path schemes in early *Nikāya-Āgama* texts.¹¹⁵ In the following, I will summarise these findings in relation to the Pāli *nikāyas* before examining the extent to which formulae for physical seclusion (what I call the *Sāmaññaphala* formula being one of three) recur in the *nikāyas*. The *sīlakkhandavagga* path description beginning with 'A *Tathāgata* appears...' recurs in a total of twenty-four *suttas* with significant variations across the four primary *nikāyas*: twelve times in the *Dīgha Nikāya*,¹¹⁶ nine in the *Majjhima Nikāya*¹¹⁷, two in the *Aṅguttara*

¹¹⁵ Gethin shows that a pattern of variations is shared across three different redactions (Theravāda, Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivāda). *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, pp. 62-63.

¹¹⁶ In addition to the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* at D I 47-86, it recurs in *suttas* 3 (I 100), 4 (I 124), 5 (I 147), 6 (I 157-58), 7 (I 159-60), 8 (I 171-174), 9 (I 181-85), 10 (I 206-09), 11 (I 214-15), 12 (I 232-33) and 13 (I 249-252). Gethin, *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, p. 12.

¹¹⁷ M *suttas* 27 (I 179-84), 38 (I 268-70), 51 (I 344-48), 60 (I 412-13), 76 (I 521-22), 79 (II 38-39), 94 (II 161-62), 101 (II 226-27), 125 (III 134-36). Gethin points out that the scheme appearing in M is generally briefer than in D. It contains minor differences in wording and unlike D, it places the contentment section after *sīla*. Steps 13-16 of Gethin's summary of the *Sāmaññaphala* scheme (see above footnote) are missing meaning that fourth *jhāna* is followed by the three knowledges culminating in the destruction of defilements. *Sutta* 125 has additional wording and *sutta* 38 replaces steps 13-20 with an account of how unwholesome states cease, Gethin, *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, p. 24.

*Nikāya*¹¹⁸ and one in the *Samyutta Nikāya*.¹¹⁹ All but the latter include with it the *Sāmaññaphala* formula for physical seclusion followed by mental seclusion. Gethin shows how the variations of the *sīlakkhandavagga* description amounts to three principal schemes beginning with ‘A *Tathāgata* appears...’:

1. The ‘four *jhāna*’ scheme,
2. The ‘formless attainments-cessation’ scheme,
3. The ‘immeasurables’ scheme.

Scheme 1, which forms the basis of the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, is considered normative whilst schemes 2 and 3 are complementary to scheme 1.¹²⁰ In addition, Gethin identifies the ‘application of mindfulness’ scheme giving a total of four descriptions of a gradual step-by-step path.¹²¹

Gethin further identifies the extent to which these four schemes are reproduced and adapted across the four primary *nikāyas*. Of the fifteen occurrences of scheme 1 outside of the *sīlakkhandavagga*, I note that eight mention physical seclusion along with the four *jhānas*.¹²² Of forty-four occurrences of scheme 2 outside of the

¹¹⁸ The first at A II 208-11 replicates the M version. We have already encountered the second, at A V 204-09, in the previous chapter. Here, the four formless attainments and the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling follow the fourth *jhāna* and replace steps 18-20. Gethin, *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, p. 25.

¹¹⁹ S IV 320-22. The partial path described here is similar to the *Tevijja-sutta* (D I 235–252) but unlike the latter, it skips stages of *samādhi*.

¹²⁰ Across the four principal *nikāyas*, the ‘four *jhāna* scheme’ recurs twenty times (all except one reference the three knowledges), the ‘formless attainments-cessation’ scheme occurs twice and the ‘immeasurables’ scheme occurs twice. Gethin, *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, pp. 29-30.

¹²¹ The *Satipaṭṭhāna* scheme is identified as gradual primarily because it maps to key step-by-step stages including the abandoning of the hindrances, the practice of *jhāna* and awakening. For example, in the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta*, each practice of *sati* directed at the body is oriented towards concentration and *jhāna*. Moreover, some items pertaining to mindfulness of body overlap with the meditative progression described in the twenty-step gradual path mentioned in the footnote above. Gethin, *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, pp. 55-60.

¹²² The *suttas* that do not include physical seclusion in scheme 1 are: M I 353-59, M I 359-68, A I 163-66, A III 25-29, A IV 106-13 and A IV 117-120. Unlike Gethin’s analysis, I have not included the *Bhaddhāli-sutta* (M I 437-47) and the *Mahāsuññata-sutta* (M III 109-18) among these as they mention physical seclusion within their narrative frames and which, although not identified as a stage, forms part of the teaching. *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, p. 32.

sīlakkhandavagga, none mention physical seclusion.¹²³ Of these, all except four passages mention all four *jhānas*.¹²⁴ Scheme 3 occurs eleven times outside the *sīlakkhandavagga*,¹²⁵ with the *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta* as the only one that mentions physical seclusion but without the four *jhānas*. Two passages mention the four *jhānas* preceding the immeasurable meditations but without physical seclusion.¹²⁶

We can then note, with help from Gethin's analysis, that the *Sāmaññaphala* formula for physical seclusion occurs in twenty-three *suttas* across three schemes that take the *sīlakkhandavagga* path as basis. Gethin's analysis also helps to reveal the extent to which the three schemes occur outside of the *sīlakkhandavagga* without mention of physical seclusion. Scheme 4 includes its own characteristic formula for physical seclusion occurring in three principal *suttas*¹²⁷ which will be discussed presently. In what follows, I will compare the extent to which *kāyaviveka* is expressed in addition to the *Sāmaññaphala* formula that may have been overlooked in previous studies. In doing so, I will examine what additional significance physical seclusion has in the Buddhist path.

In addition to the twenty-three occurrences of the *Sāmaññaphala* formula for physical seclusion identified from Gethin's analysis, I calculate that the same formula occurs in a further two *suttas* in the *Dīgha Nikāya*¹²⁸ and four in the *Majjhima*

¹²³ Of the forty-four occurrences of scheme 2 across Gethin's Tables 7 and 8, one appears in D, fourteen in M and twenty-nine in A. *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, pp. 36-37. I have not included A V 201-10 since it is already accounted for as a variant of the *sīlakkhandavagga* path beginning with 'A *Tathāgata* appears...'

¹²⁴ The *suttas* containing scheme 2 that do not mention the four *jhānas* are: D II 70-71, M II 263-65 (although this *sutta* mentions attaining the 'imperturbable' (*āṇāṇja*) associated with the fourth *jhāna*), M III 104-09 (the *Cūlasuññatā-sutta*, discussed below) and M III 222. See Table 7 and 8, Gethin, *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, pp. 37-38.

¹²⁵ Table 9, Gethin, *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, p. 44. I have not included the *Tevijja-sutta* (D I 250-51) which replaces steps 9-20 of the *sīlakkhandavagga* path mentioned in the above footnote with the four immeasurable meditations (or *brahmavihārās*).

¹²⁶ The first is the *Mahāsudassana-sutta* (D II 186-87) and the second is the *Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta* (D III 77-78). See Table 9, Gethin, *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, p. 44.

¹²⁷ Only one, the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* (M III 88-99), presents both physical seclusion and the four *jhānas*, whilst the *Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* (M II 290-315) and the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* (M III 78-88) do not mention the four *jhānas*.

¹²⁸ At D II 242, 2-4 (*Mahā-Govinda-sutta*) and at D III 49, 8-11 (*Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta*) in each case preceding the four immeasurables but without explicit mention of the four *jhānas*. I note that Gethin has not included the physical seclusion stage for the *Mahā-Govinda-sutta* (in Table 9) but the full *Sāmaññaphala* formula is used to elaborate the term *ekodibhāva*

*Nikāya*¹²⁹(with no further mentions in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and *Samyutta Nikāya*). This gives a total of twenty-nine *suttas* in which the *Sāmaññaphala* formula occurs either as part of a gradual path or separately across the four principal *nikāyas*.¹³⁰

One of the additional *suttas* that repeats the *Sāmaññaphala* formula is the *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta*. In this *sutta*, the Buddha teaches a version of scheme 3 in which his disciples practice moral restraint, find a secluded place, abandon the five hindrances and practice the four immeasurable meditations.¹³¹ However, the Buddha is characterised by his follower, Sandhana, as one who ‘resorts (*paṭisevati*) to forests, places deep in the woods and remote lodgings [where there is] little talk, [with] an atmosphere of abandonment, remote from people and suitable for retreat.’¹³² Sometimes this phrase appears in an abbreviated form: ‘he resorts to forests, places deep in the woods and remote lodgings’.¹³³ For convenience, I will refer to this additional formula as the *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula for physical seclusion. I calculate that the *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula recurs, either in longer or abbreviated forms, fifteen times in the four principal *nikāyas*: three times each in the *Dīgha Nikāya*¹³⁴ and the *Majjhima*

(‘unity’/‘alone’) which, along with *karuṇādhimutta* (‘devoted to compassion’), are used to describe one who attains the ‘deathless Brahmā world’.

¹²⁹ M I 274, 31-33, (*Mahā-Assapura-sutta*), M I 440, 18-20 (*Bhaddhāli-sutta*) and M III 3, 20-22 (*Gaṇaka-Moggallāma-sutta*) in each case preceding the four *jhānas* and at M III 115-116 (*Mahāsuññata Sutta*, see Chapter 1) where it appears in isolation without a direct mention of mental seclusion.

¹³⁰ A modified version of the *Sāmaññaphala* formula also appears in isolation in the *Milindapañha* recommending seclusion in ‘the forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a cave, a hillside hollow, a cremation ground, a place deep in the woods, an open space, a pile of straw, [where there is] little talk, [with] an atmosphere of abandonment, remote from people and suitable for retreat. My translation of Mil 369, 14-17: *araññaṃ rukkhamūlaṃ pabbataṃ kandaraṃ giriguhaṃ susānaṃ vanapatthaṃ abbhokāsaṃ palālapuñjaṃ appasaddaṃ appanigghosaṃ vijanavātaṃ manussarāhaseyyakaṃ paṭisallāṇasārappaṃ*.

¹³¹ D III 48-50.

¹³² My translation of D II 38, 3-6: *araññe vanapatthāni pantāni senasānanāni paṭisevati appasaddāni appanigghosāni vijanavātāni manussarāhaseyyakāni paṭisallāna-sārappāni ti*. Although the characterisation of the Buddha as a lover of solitude is made by another, later the Buddha tells Nigrodha how *buddhas* and *arahats* do not partake in loud argument and talk but instead seek lodgings in solitary places that were free from noise. (D III 54, 11-14).

¹³³ Or more briefly as *sevetha pantāni senāsanaṇi* ‘he should seek out remote lodgings’.

¹³⁴ D II 329, 16-17 (*Pāyāsi-sutta*), applied to ‘ascetics and brahmins’ who develop the divine eye, D III 38, 2-6 (*Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta*) and D III 195, 15-18 (*Āṭṭānāṭṭiya-sutta*) applied to the Buddha’s disciples.

Nikāya,¹³⁵ twice in the *Samyutta Nikāya*¹³⁶ and seven times in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.¹³⁷ It also appears eleven times in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*¹³⁸ giving a total of twenty-six occurrences of this formula across all five *nikāyas* either¹³⁹ as part of a teaching or as a description of the Buddha or his followers

A notable pattern in the occurrence of the *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula is in the particularly rigorous approach to meditation by forest dwelling *bhikkhus* (*ārañṇaka*). Dwelling in the forest and remote places is characteristic of a collection of austere practices (*dhutaṅgas*) of some *bhikkhus*.¹⁴⁰ The *Visuddhimagga* expands these as thirteen which are closely associated with particular ascetic types. The *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula is employed in a passage used to describe *bhikkhus*, who live mostly in seclusion and only return to the community for regular recitation of the *Pātimokkha*.¹⁴¹ It is used again to highlight how the rigorous demands of the forest make solitary meditation particularly challenging and urgent.¹⁴² It also appears in the *Bhayaberava-sutta* presenting the clearest paradigm of skilful forest dwelling. Here, the Bodhisatta

¹³⁵ M I 17, 17-18 (*Bhayabherava-sutta*) describing the confident habit of the forest dwelling Bodhisatta purified of bodily conduct, M II 8, 28-30 (*Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta*) clearly applied to the practice of forest dwellers (*ārañṇakā*) and M III 293, 5 (*Nagaravindeyya-sutta*) to describe those in religious life practising for the ridding of lust, hatred and delusion.

¹³⁶ S I 154, 16 is about those who should dwell mindfully in the community if unsuccessful practising alone and S IV 36, 25-28 describes how even though a *bhikkhu* resorts to remote places, he is not ‘alone’ if craving is present in his mind.

¹³⁷ A I 60, 31-22 describing the Buddha’s seclusion; A II 138, 6-7 describing how a *bhikkhu* is withdrawn both physically and mentally; A II 252, 17-18 on the conditions by which a monk is fit to resort to remote places; A III 103, 10-11 on the conditions that make practising remotely difficult; A III 135, 20 on the qualities of those who are fit to live remotely; A III 138, 28-29 encouraging new *bhikkhus* to live physically secluded and A III 344, 7-8 describing a forest dweller who gains requisites easily but dispels the honour that comes with it and consequently does not neglect seclusion.

¹³⁸ Usually repeating themes from elsewhere: Sn 72 to describe how one is alone ‘like a rhinoceros horn’; Th 142 (= S I 154); Nidd I 104 (Ne) to describe the resort of the *bhagavā*; Nidd I 106 (Ne) to explain how one is physically ‘alone’ (*eko*), see later; Nidd I 114 (Ne) to describe how a *muni* lives ‘alone’; Nidd I 154 (Ne) (= Nidd I 104); Nidd I 248 (Ne) (= Nidd I 104); Nidd I 254 (Ne) (= Nidd I 104); Nidd I 342 (Ne) to describe how the *bhagavā* lives physically alone; Nidd I 362 (Ne) (= Nidd I 104) and Nidd I 386 (Ne) (= Nidd I 104).

¹³⁹ It also occurs once in the *Milindapañha*, Mil 402 (= S I 154).

¹⁴⁰ M I 30, 19-21. Forest dweller (*añṇaka*), a dweller of remote places (*pantasenāsana*), alms beggar (*piṇḍapātika*), house-to-house beggar (*sapadānacārī*), rag robe wearer (*pamsukūlika*) and coarse robe wearer (*lūkhacīvaradhara*).

¹⁴¹ M II 8, 28-30.

¹⁴² Due to the presence of snakes and harmful creepy-crawlies, ill health, dangerous animals, bandits and wild spirits, A III 100-03.

courageously dispels his fear whilst alone in the forest depths. The outer perils are vividly connected to the darkest innermost forms of fear. The example clearly puts emphasis on the essential preparation required for this endeavour having first purified livelihood, abandoned the five hindrances and developed deep states of *samādhi* and other skilful mental factors.¹⁴³ Elsewhere, the Buddha makes known his displeasure towards one who lives near a village because, even though they attain states of *samādhi*, they are likely to be distracted and thus compromise their concentration. The *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula is then employed to distinguish one who, by virtue of their forest-dwelling, pleases the Buddha. By contrast, even if this forest-dweller is sleepy, he is more likely to restore his *samādhi*.¹⁴⁴ Whilst this latter *sutta* highlights forest practice, it also reveals a more basic principle to success in meditation. The ability of the meditator to advert his/her mind to *jhāna*, even if they have mastered *samādhi* to some degree, is more likely to be achieved when he/she is secluded from others.

What I think the above suggests is that, at least according to some passages, the ‘forest-dweller’ is less about a particular ascetic type but rather a basic paradigm for all. Indeed, according to several passages, the gulf between the forest-dweller and the ordinary *bhikkhu* is not as wide we might imagine. Although forest-dwellers may be singled out for their forbearance, the patient endurance of all sensual objects is expected of anyone practising Right Concentration.¹⁴⁵ Any *bhikkhu* is not fit to resort to ‘forests, places deep in the woods and remote lodgings’ if he possesses thoughts of sensuality, ill will or harming and is not wise. Those who are fit possess their opposites.¹⁴⁶ We could interpret this as another expression of the importance of how *sīla* and *paññā* are required prior to any form of *kāyaviveka*.¹⁴⁷ In the *Gulissāni-sutta*, the *arahat* Sāriputta explains to Moggallāna how a forest-dweller, as a model of rectitude, is one who answers directly

¹⁴³ M I 17-20. The *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula is used repeatedly to contrast the Bodhisatta with other ‘ascetics and brahmins’ who have not purified themselves and consequently succumb to fear and terror.

¹⁴⁴ A III 343-44.

¹⁴⁵ A III 137-8.

¹⁴⁶ A II 252, 9-23.

¹⁴⁷ At A III 135-36, the same is said of a *bhikkhu* who conforms to a list of five qualities that lead to arahatship. He, 1. is virtuous, 2. is learned, 3. has aroused energy, 4. gains the four *jhānas* at will, 5. is liberated by wisdom.

when questioned on a detail of his practice.¹⁴⁸ At the end of the *sutta*, Sāriputta admits that if this is the case for a forest-dweller, how more so it must be true of the *bhikkhu* who lives near the village.¹⁴⁹ According to such canonical evidence, the contrast between the ‘forest monk’ and the ‘village monk’ is therefore not as clear cut. Based on the above, we do not necessarily have to agree with those who postulate that learning is the dominant way of life of the Buddhist monastic even since the canonical period.¹⁵⁰ What I suggest is more apparent is that meditation, as the paradigm of the forest-dweller is, in some form or another, a habit that is valid and applicable for all monastics.

Further evidence to support this claim appears in other *suttas* that evoke the *Udumbarikasāhanāda* formula. One passage lists the ways in which newly ordained *bhikkhus* are to be encouraged and established in discipline, sense restraint and mindfulness, limited talking, physical withdrawal (*kāyavūpakaṭṭha*) and in right view. Notably, in being physically withdrawn, the passage instructs new *bhikkhus* to be ‘forest dwellers’, whilst evoking the *Udumbarikasāhanāda* formula.¹⁵¹ Such instruction fits with the premise that physical seclusion is part of a continuum of practice along with mental seclusion established on preparatory practices described in the *sīlakkhandavagga*. Elsewhere, knowing that a *bhikkhu* resorts to ‘forests and remote places deep in the woods’ is evidence that he is practising to be rid of lust, hatred and delusion, since in those places, he is secluded from all forms of sensuality.¹⁵² This idea is consistent with how the *Udumbarikasāhanāda* formula is employed elsewhere to describe one who is both physically and mentally withdrawn¹⁵³ and consonant with what I call ‘right

¹⁴⁸ M I 469-73. The *ārañṇaka* should be respectful to his/her companions. He/she should: 1. be respectful to his fellow *bhikkhus/bhikkhunīs*, 2. be skilled in good behaviour, 3. not enter the village too early or return too late, 4. not visit families before or after the meal, 5. not be arrogant or vain, 6. not speak harshly or loosely, 7. associate with good friends, 8. guard the sense doors, 9. eat moderately, 10. be devoted to wakefulness, 11. be energetic, 12. be mindful, 13. be wise, 14. apply himself/herself to higher *dhamma* and *vinaya*, 15. apply himself/herself to meditative liberations and 16. apply himself/herself to the super-human state.

¹⁴⁹ M I 473, 1-3: *ārañṇakenāpi kho āvuso Moggallāna bhikkhunā ime dhammā samādāya vattitabbā, pag’eva gāmantavihārinā ti.*

¹⁵⁰ ‘It is certainly the case in medieval and modern times — and I argue that it holds in ancient times as well — that not only have learning and praxis been seen by institutionalised Buddhism as different vocations, but also that the former has been the preferred basis of regular saṅgha life.’ Clough, *Early Indian and Theravāda Buddhism*, p. 166.

¹⁵¹ A III 138, 7-33.

¹⁵² M III 293-34.

¹⁵³ A II 138, 6-7.

solitude'. The same formula is used in a partial description of the gradual path itself. *Kāyaviveka* — as expressed by the *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula and *cittaviveka* — as the four *jhānas* — are a series of factors (*aṅgas*) starting with confidence, virtue and learning that make up a sequence leading to a *bhikkhu*'s liberation.¹⁵⁴

The concept of seclusion as continuum can also be traced in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* passage about Upāli, discussed in Chapter 1, which initially appears to warn against forest practice for some.¹⁵⁵ The *sutta* describes a gradual path including the *Sāmaññaphala* formula. Each of the stages from the first *jhāna* to the penultimate formless attainment is described as a 'dwelling more excellent and refined than what it precedes.' And, at each stage of mental seclusion, the *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula is employed: 'seeing this quality in themselves my disciples seek out forests, woodland thickets and remote lodgings, but they still have not attained their goal.'¹⁵⁶ At the final stage, the formula is repeated to stress the mode of life of *arahats* who continue to live this way. Mohan Wijayaratna suggests that the *sutta* emphasises cenobitic life since, unlike the forest where Upāli can only meditate, in the community he could learn as well as meditate.¹⁵⁷ I agree with Wijayaratna that it is reasonable to assume that meditation would be prescribed to *bhikkhus* settled in the monastery. However, this interpretation suggests that the discourse is limited by speaking to a specific type of *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī*.¹⁵⁸ I suggest that the passage also demonstrates the value of meditation in terms of repeated stages of physical and mental seclusion that inspire any *bhikkhu/*

¹⁵⁴ A V 10-11: A *bhikkhu* 1. is endowed with confidence, 2. is virtuous, 3. is learned, 4. is a speaker of the *Dhamma*, 5. frequents assemblies, 6. teaches *Dhamma* to an assembly, 7. is an expert in discipline, 8. is a forest dweller, 9. gains at will the four *jhānas* and 10. has destroyed the taints and is liberated by wisdom.

¹⁵⁵ Such ones are like smaller animals who sink in a lake compared to an elephant who finds a firm footing. A V 202-03.

¹⁵⁶ A V 207-08: *mama sāvakā attani dhammaṃ sampassamānā araññe vanapatthāni pantāni senāsanāni paṭisevanti, no ca kho tāva anuppattasadatthā viharanti*. Translation adapted from Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, p. 1480.

¹⁵⁷ Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, p. 112.

¹⁵⁸ However, Upāli's personal narrative may appear more to emphasise how, in the gradual path, forest practice is predicated on the basis of discipline. By including the lengthy preceding stages of monastic virtue etc, the *sutta* appears to foreground the importance of personal conduct and group responsibility. I refer to the commentarial explanation that Upāli is associated with monastic discipline. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, pp. 1851-52, n. 2137.

bhikkhunī to fully develop and assimilate these practices into their lifestyles. It also underscores how *viveka* is, itself, a stage-by-stage process of deepening *samādhi*.

A third formula for physical seclusion that is repeated across the canon is found in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*:

gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty place; he sits down crossing his legs, straightens his body and establishes mindfulness in front of him.¹⁵⁹

I calculate that this formula appears thirty-four times across all five *nikāyas* either in full form (as above), or in part: once in the *Dīgha Nikāya*,¹⁶⁰ eight times in the *Majjhima Nikāya*,¹⁶¹ sixteen times in the *Samyutta Nikāya*,¹⁶² eight times in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*¹⁶³ and once in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*.¹⁶⁴ The formula — which I refer to as the *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula — is significant in that establishing mindfulness practice is predicated on finding a secluded place. In some places, its occurrence alongside the *Sāmaññaphalla* formula appears to point to more detail to the practice of meditation which is elaborated elsewhere.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ My translation of D II 291, 3-5: *araññagato vā rukkhamūlagato vā suññāgāragato vā nisīdati pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā ujum kāyaṃ paṇidhāya parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā.*

¹⁶⁰ D II 291, 3-4 (*Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*).

¹⁶¹ It appears partially at M I 297, 36 (liberation of mind through emptiness), M I 323, 5 (restoring cordiality), M I 333, 18 (entering cessation after, abiding in immeasurable attainments and contemplation of unlovely aspects of the body) and M II 263, 25-26 (contemplation of impermanence); in full at M I 56, 12-14 (*Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*), M I 425, 6-9 (on mindfulness of in-and-out breathing), M III 82, 24-27 (*Ānāpāna-sati-sutta*) and M III 89, 10-13 (*Kāyagatāsati-sutta*).

¹⁶² Partially at S I 219, 28-29 (11.3, in relation to fear in the forest), S IV 296, 32-33 (41.7, liberation of mind through emptiness), in full in some of the *suttas* of *Ānāpānasamyuttaṃ* at S V 311, 7-9 (54.1), S V 313, 9-11 (54.3), S V 314 (54.4 and 54.5), S V 315, 14-15 (54.6), S V 316, 18-19 (54.7), S V 317, 1-2 (54.8), S V 322, 7-8 (54.9), S V 323, 12-13 (54.10), S V 329, 20-21 (54.13), S V 334, 16 (54.14), S V 335 (54.15), S V 336 (54.16) and S V 340, 25-26 (54.20).

¹⁶³ Partially at A I 147, 23-24, A III 353, 9-11, A V 109, 5-6, A V 323, 13-14; in full at A III 92, 23-24 and at A III, 100, 9-11 combined with the *Sāmaññaphala* formula, setting up mindfulness, preceding abandonment of hindrances, attaining the four *jhānas* and the four noble truths, at A IV 436-37, in relation to mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, the four *jhānas*, formless attainments and cessation and at A V 111, 12-14 establishing mindfulness of in-and-out breathing.

¹⁶⁴ At Ud 19, 22-23 (overcoming fear, see later in this chapter). It also occurs partially in the paracanonical *Milindapañha* with regards to establishing mindfulness of the body, Mil 393, 9-10.

¹⁶⁵ Such as with reference to emptiness meditation at A I 296-97.

The *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula is combined with the *Sāmaññaphala* formula in three separate *suttas*. The first two, in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, compare monks to warriors who are either defeated in battle or go onto victory. In one passage, the *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula appears first in the case of a *bhikkhu* who, like a warrior wounded in battle, sits alone to meditate only to be overcome with lust for the opposite sex.¹⁶⁶ The *bhikkhu*, who remains steadfast in his meditative effort, even if he is literally embraced by a female, goes on to reach arahatship like the victor in a battle. In his case, the *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula is followed by the *Sāmaññaphala* formula, the abandoning of hindrances, four *jhānas* and the destruction of the taints.¹⁶⁷ In the second example, the two formulae again combine in the case of the ‘victorious’ *bhikkhu* who is fully guarded by body, speech and mind and has fully restrained his sense faculties. He frequents secluded places, attains the four *jhānas* and reaches arahatship.¹⁶⁸ Another combination of formulae appears in a *sutta* that I mentioned in the previous chapter that recommends that a *bhikkhu* who feels ‘crowded’ like a bull elephant in his herd should seek out seclusion.¹⁶⁹ The elephant relieves his stress by rubbing his body with branches of a tree but also prior to this, through his realisation that he is no longer hemmed in.¹⁷⁰ Here, the *Sāmaññaphala* formula is preceded by the *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula in full form and more clearly references the establishment of mindfulness practice.¹⁷¹ The combination of the formulae again speaks of a deepened commitment to practice and fulfilment of spiritual qualities suggested in the examples above. I also suggest that the reference to the *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula points to how mindfulness helps weaken lust states.¹⁷² By pointing to the act of simply paying attention to breathing strengthens the therapeutic significance of the latter passage¹⁷³ and

¹⁶⁶ A III 91-92.

¹⁶⁷ A III 92-93.

¹⁶⁸ A III 99-100.

¹⁶⁹ A IV 435-38.

¹⁷⁰ A IV 436, 9-10.

¹⁷¹ A IV 437, 2-5.

¹⁷² As in the *asubha* or ‘unlovely’ contemplations in the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta*, M III 90-91.

¹⁷³ The therapeutic effect of simply taking a deep breath is also traceable in the following passage: ‘Just as, bhikkhus, in the last month of the hot season, when a mass of dust and dirt has swirled up, a great rain cloud out of season disperses it and quells it on the spot, so too concentration by mindfulness of breathing, when developed and cultivated, is peaceful and sublime, an ambrosial pleasant dwelling, and it disperses and quells on the spot evil unwholesome states whenever they arise. And how is this so? Here bhikkhus, a bhikkhu having gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty hut, sits down.’ S V 321-322. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p. 1774.

reinforces my earlier point about the remedial value of *kāyaviveka*. It also reminds us how *kāyaviveka* is part of a continuum that entails the simplification of experience involving both separation from unhelpful conditions and embracing salutary ones.

The three formulae are similar in that their presence in passages gives them a prescriptive flavour with regards to physical seclusion. As a straightforward list of places to sit and meditate, the *Sāmaññaphala* formula starts with the foot of a tree, but after listing even more remote and barren places includes, most strikingly, the cemetery (*susāna*). The formula could, then, be understood as a literary motif if we consider the underlying narrative themes of preaching and debate in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Cemetery meditation is associated with particularly strict *dhutaṅga* type monks, some of whom are said to possess strong ascetic powers and, consequently, receive the admiration and respect of laity. What better way is there for the *suttas* to assert the authority and supremacy of the Buddha and his followers and appeal to the laity for their support by demonstrating precisely why and how they go further than other ascetics and reach the ultimate goal.¹⁷⁴

Each formula can be used to stress particular points about the importance of physical seclusion. The *Sāmaññaphala* formula, used mostly as part of the gradual scheme but also used in partial descriptions stresses how *kāyaviveka* is part of a continuum of *samādhi*. The *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula appears closely associated with forest-dwellers. However, scrutiny of passages, suggests that forest withdrawal is not necessarily limited to more rigorous ascetic life. The application of the formula upholds basic principles of deepening practice and the assimilation of spiritual factors required for the full consummation of the path. The *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula occurs extensively in passages suggesting how *kāyaviveka* is helpful in establishing mindfulness. Its combination with other formulae appears to point to more detail to the exact nature of secluded meditation practice. Whilst forest practice is not suited for all, the repeating and combining of formulae suggests that regular quiet meditation practice,

¹⁷⁴ I am grateful to Rita Langer for highlighting this point. For a particularly striking example of contemporary *dhutaṅga* monks and cemetery dwelling see Kamala Tiyavanich's study of ascetic monks in Thailand who, having been encouraged by the laity to live in cemetery grounds in order to appease the spirits who reside there, consequently gain the strong admiration of the villagers. *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth Century Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), p. 163.

preferably involving some form of physical seclusion, gives these presentations of physical seclusion a prescriptive character.¹⁷⁵

2.5.5 cittaviveka

Earlier, we noted how, according to the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, wholesome qualities arise when the mind is ‘secluded from sense desire and unwholesome thoughts’ in the first *jhāna*. In the following, I will explore how the process of *samādhi* continues as stages of purification and integration from preliminary concentration, through what the *Niddesa* calls *cittaviveka* — each of the four *jhānas* and four formless attainments.¹⁷⁶ As purification, the meditator strengthens skilful qualities accompanied by progressively more sublime states of spiritual happiness consonant with the naked radiance of the awakened mind. As integration, the mind is unified with the meditation object and progressively ‘alone’ or isolated from sensory stimuli. Due to the nature of the meditator’s mind radically transformed by *samādhi* and the subtle effects of meditation on the body, the meditator can be considered ‘separated’ or distinguished from others.

The process of meditation leading up to access concentration involves sustained mental presence with the meditation object. Whilst access concentration is a commentarial term not formally defined in the *nikāyas*¹⁷⁷ and, therefore, not formally a part of what the *Niddesa* calls *cittaviveka*, it is nevertheless considered a major breakthrough in meditation. In access concentration, the five *jhāna* factors have become stronger and the five hindrances weaker to the point of quiescence. A mind verging on

¹⁷⁵ As we shall see from other chapters however, there are other imaginative *nikāya* descriptions of seclusion that contrast with the prescriptive flavour of the passages described above.

¹⁷⁶ ‘What is mental seclusion? The mind of one attained to the first *jhāna* is secluded from the hindrances...second *jhāna*...from sustained and examining thought...third *jhāna*...from joy...fourth *jhāna*...from pleasure and pain... base of infinite space...from the perception of form, the perception of impingement, the perception of diversity... base of infinite consciousness...from the perception of the base of infinite space...the base of nothingness... from the perception of the base of infinite consciousness...base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is secluded from the perception of the base of infinite consciousness.’ My translation of Nidd I 27, 1-12 (Ee)/Nidd I 19-20 (Be): *katamo cittaviveko? paṭhamam jhānam samāpannassa nīvaraṇehi cittaṃ vivittaṃ hoti...dutiyaṃ...jhānam...vitakkavicārehi...tatiyaṃ...jhānam...pītiyā...cittaṃ...catuttha...jhānaṃ...sukhadukkhehi...ākāsānañcāyatanaṃ...rūpasaññāya...paṭighasaññāya...nānattasaññāya...viññānañcāyatanaṃ...ākāsānañcāyatanaññāya...ākīñcaññāyatanaṃ...viññānañcāyatanaññāya...nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ ākiñcaññāyatanaññāya cittaṃ vivittaṃ hoti.*

¹⁷⁷ Cousins, *Buddhist Jhana*, p. 118.

full *jhāna* is accompanied by a transformed mental image of the meditation object, clearly corresponding to an altered state of consciousness that is bright, lucid but delicate.¹⁷⁸ Although access concentration is vulnerable and requires maintenance through strong mindfulness, coaxing and protection,¹⁷⁹ it clearly marks a significant stage in concentration.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, access concentration is sometimes called ‘access *jhāna*’ in the commentaries,¹⁸¹ effectively giving *jhāna* a total of nine stages.

Entered upon the first *jhāna*, the meditator attains a state of concentration that is ‘born of seclusion’ (*viveka-ja*), marking the experience of full absorption. This stage corresponds to ‘seclusion by suppression’ whereby all five hindrances are, yet still only temporarily, suspended.¹⁸² According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the five *jhāna* factors including spiritual joy and happiness are now firmly present.¹⁸³ Peter Harvey points out that being free of desire for sense objects in the first *jhāna* does not mean that there is a lack of awareness of them.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, the *Anupada-sutta* describes how *sati* along with other mental states is present in first *jhāna*.¹⁸⁵ A mind free from hindrances and prepared for insight in the first *jhāna* is ‘healthy’ (*kalla*), ‘supple’ (*mudu*), ‘elated’ (*udagga*) and ‘clear’ (*pasanna*).¹⁸⁶ Whilst these terms speak of the remedial effects of solitary meditation, others more clearly speak of the meditator’s mind directed towards *nibbāna*. He is ‘unattracted, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated, with a mind rid of barriers’.¹⁸⁷ Such epithets give us a clearer indication of an experience that is more integrated with a natural unencumbered state. In the first *jhāna*, the mind is quite

¹⁷⁸ The ‘counterpart sign’ (see above footnote). *Vism* 125-26.

¹⁷⁹ *Vism* 130, 11-24.

¹⁸⁰ Gethin notes that access concentration is qualified as *pubba-bhāga* (or active ‘prior stage’) which appears to raise its significance from a purely a mere passing stage of momentary consciousness to a ‘more definite and enduring stage...to be cultivated in its own right’. *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, pp. 333-34. Cousins notes how access concentration leaves the meditator crucially prepared for insight. *Buddhist Jhana*, p. 123.

¹⁸¹ Cousins, *Buddhist Jhana*, p. 122.

¹⁸² *Vism* 143, 10-13.

¹⁸³ *Vism* 146-47. As Cousins notes, *citassa ’ekagatta* is absent from the stock phrase of the first *jhāna* but is implied in the phrase ‘born of concentration’ (*samādhi-ja*) used to describe the second *jhāna*. *Buddhist Jhana*, p. 122.

¹⁸⁴ Harvey explains that the phrase ‘quite secluded from *kāmas*’ (*vivicc ’eva kāmehi*) must refer to sense desire and not the sense objects themselves, *The Four Jhānas*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁵ *M III* 25, 17.

¹⁸⁶ *M I* 380, 1-2.

¹⁸⁷ *M III* 25, 22-23. Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 889.

serene and isolated from sensory stimuli¹⁸⁸ now experiencing what, according to the *Abhidhamma*, is the realm of ‘pure form’ (*rūpāvacara*).¹⁸⁹ The mental purification of first the *jhāna* is said to even create a noticeable radiance in the physical presence of those who attain it.¹⁹⁰ The meditator is, in a sense, ‘born again’ and separated from the ordinary and untrained.

Whilst the mind is one-pointed (*ekagattā*) in the first *jhāna*, there is still a tendency to be distracted by strong emotions or sense impressions. Subsequent stages of *jhāna* see a strengthening of concentration and the elimination of previously cultivated strengthening factors so that in the second *jhāna*, concentration becomes more wholly centred on the object. *Vitakka* and *vicāra* drop away leaving only joy, happiness and ‘unity’ (*ekodibhāva*).¹⁹¹ The inclusion of *ekodibhāva* clearly suggests a state of inner solitude where the mind has become more stable, unified and fully alone with the object. Accompanying this mental separation is a deeper refinement of experience more consonant with the mind’s basic purity. The meditator experiences the ‘joy of seclusion’ (*paviveka pīti*) which is characteristic of a state untarnished by sensual pleasures (*nirāmisā*).¹⁹² Also, in second *jhāna*, the silence first experienced in first *jhāna* is described as ‘noble’ (*ariya tunhībhāva*).¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Although ‘noble silence’ is attributed to the second *jhāna*, the mind in the first *jhāna* no longer perceives through any of the five physical senses and is also devoid of speech activity in first *jhāna*. Cousins, *Buddhist Jhāna*, p. 125. This is presumably because *vitakka* and *vicāra*, as what precede speech (S IV 293, 23-25), are now directed fully to the meditation object.

¹⁸⁹ In this realm, only a subtle residue of matter persists. Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, p. 56.

¹⁹⁰ Such as how Sāriputta’s serene complexion, after he emerges from first *jhāna*, catches Ānanda’s attention, S III 235, 16-29.

¹⁹¹ D I 74, 13-16. According to the CPD, the precise derivation of *ekodi* is debateable so an exact translation of *ekodibhāva* is difficult. Richard Gombrich suggests that the term is one of several the Buddha borrowed from Brahmanism where *ekodibhāva* is akin to the experience of unity with Brahman, *What the Buddha Thought* (London: Equinox, 2009), p. 204. Buddhaghosa uses word play to explain it as ‘oneness’ where the ‘one’ is of the mind and not of a being or of a soul, Vism 156, 28-29.

¹⁹² A III 207, 14-27. The ‘joy of seclusion’ is also associated with first *jhāna* and is where pain and unhappiness connected to the unwholesome or with sensuality do not occur. See Harvey, *The Four Jhānas*, p. 15.

¹⁹³ S II 273, 13-17.

This process of purification and unification continues such that key mental factors are fully tranquilised (*paṭipassaddha*) and successively stopped (*niruddha*).¹⁹⁴ In the third *jhāna*, joy has subsided and a state of spiritual felicity is of a kind where happiness (*sukha*) simply persists throughout the mind and body.¹⁹⁵ The *Visuddhimagga* explains that this state of felicity is unsurpassed¹⁹⁶ and is also experienced in the physical body after emerging from the third *jhāna* as a kind of ‘superior’ matter.¹⁹⁷ In the fourth *jhāna*, the mind is completely secluded from the five hindrances, although not yet permanently cut off.¹⁹⁸ *Sukha* is supplanted by a sublime level of peace that is secluded from all feeling,¹⁹⁹ associated with equanimity (*upekkhā*) and accompanied by a purified mindfulness.²⁰⁰ At this stage of the path, the mind is peaceful (*santa*), refined (*pañīta*), fully tranquilised (*paṭipassaddha*) and unified (*ekodibhāva*), ready to exercise its psychic powers.²⁰¹ The imagery of the fourth *jhāna* in terms of the body completely covered by a white cloth²⁰² speaks of the isolated experience of the mind’s naturally bright depths.²⁰³ The image of the shrouded body’s softened edges offers only a vestige of bodily activity (breathing) experienced previously in the realm of the senses but now imperceptible. In the fourth *jhāna*, the mind is perfectly equanimous, ‘unshakeable’ (*aniñjita*), and ‘powerful’.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁴ S IV 217-18. This passage describes six tranquilisations relating to each of the four *jhānas*, the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling and of final liberation when the taints are destroyed.

¹⁹⁵ D I 75, 6-27. See Harvey, *The Four Jhānas*, pp. 9-10 who explains also how equanimity, mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) also remain.

¹⁹⁶ Vism 163,8-9: ‘...this kind of happiness (*sukha*) is exceedingly sweet since there is none greater’, Translation adapted from Ñāṇamoli, *Path of Purification*, p. 154. This suggests that in third *jhāna*, the meditator experiences the highest kind of pleasure.

¹⁹⁷ That is, *sukha* is experienced in both the mental (*nāmakāya*) and physical body (*rūpakāya*), Vism 163, 16-18.

¹⁹⁸ Note that the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* uses the phrase *vigatūpakkilesa* ‘defilement disappeared’ but what is referred to are the five hindrances, D I 76, 14.

¹⁹⁹ A IV 415, 3-4.

²⁰⁰ D I 75, 28-31.

²⁰¹ A I 254-56.

²⁰² D I 77, 3-9.

²⁰³ ‘The image of sitting enclosed by a white cloth suggests being contained within, set apart from the world in a cleansed, pure state’, Harvey, *The Four Jhānas*, p. 11.

²⁰⁴ The *Udāna* commentary describes *āneñja* as a state ‘extremely remote (*suvidūrabhāvato*) from obstructive states’, Ud-a 185, 27-29. By powerful, I refer to the *iddhis* or powers that are attained after the fourth *jhāna* with which the meditator is able to walk on water, fly, etc. See the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* D I 77-78.

Progressive stages of mental seclusion first achieve relief from the hindrances followed by the stilling of mental factors such that only mindfulness and equanimity remain. Solitude can be understood as mental unification described as *ekagattā* and *ekodibhāva*. Another related term that appears occasionally in the texts is *ekodibhūta*.²⁰⁵ *ekodibhūta* has a similar application to *ekodibhāva*²⁰⁶ which is known to apply to the solitude of *jhāna*, but from elsewhere, *ekodibhūta* is clarified as rooted in physical seclusion.²⁰⁷ The stress on the literal in such terminology reminds us of a basic principle. That is, even the most advanced meditators physical withdrawal matters in order to root out subtle bonds to society that might persist in the mind.²⁰⁸ Yet at each stage of *cittaviveka*, the refinement of concomitant states of non-sensual (*nirāmisa*) spiritual bliss buoys the meditator through deeper states of *samādhi*. In fourth *jhāna*, bliss is intensified such that the meditator is ‘alone’ with only a supremely subtle feeling of bliss that suffuses the mind.

According to the ‘four *jhāna*’ scheme described in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* (scheme 1), the stilling of the five hindrances in the fourth *jhāna* marks the completion in meditative calming. However, scheme 2 ‘formless attainments-cessation’, presents further levels of *samādhi* as gradual stages of mental simplification. This process is most commonly described in terms of nine progressive attainments culminating in final

²⁰⁵ Explaining *ekodibhūta* at Sn 975, the *Mahāniddeśa* writes: “‘unified’: with one-pointed mind, undistracted mind, unscattered mind, serenity, the faculty of concentration, the power of concentration, right concentration.’ Nidd I 386 (Ne): *ekodī ti ekaggacitto avikkhittacitto avisāhaṭamānaso samatho samādhindriyaṃ samādhibalaṃ sammāsamādhīti ekodibhūto*. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 1217.

²⁰⁶ Whilst *ekodibhūta* seems to describe a mind that is concentrated or secluded, *ekodibhāva* appears to be a technical term specifically related to the attainment of strong unification in *jhāna*. CPD s.v. *ekodī*.

²⁰⁷ ‘Lord, I understand the meaning of “concentrated.” A certain one resorts to a secluded lodging: the forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a cave, a hillside hollow, a cremation ground, a place deep in the woods, an open space, a pile of straw.’ My translation of D II 242, 1-5. *ekodibhūto ti cāhaṃ bhoto ājānāmi. idh’ ekacco vivittaṃ senāsanaṃ bhajati araññaṃ rukkhamūlaṃ pabbataṃ kandaraṃ giriguhaṃ susānaṃ vanapatthaṃ abbhokāsaṃ palālapuñjaṃ*.

²⁰⁸ A III 392-99. The *sutta* explains how it is still possible for a *bhikkhu* to revert to lay life after the attainment of each stage of *jhāna*, the formless attainment and even if he is able to pay no attention to all signs in signless concentration, if he allows inappropriate associations with society.

awakening.²⁰⁹ As mentioned above, only one version of this scheme (the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*) describes both physical seclusion and the four *jhānas* whilst stopping short of full awakening through knowledge of the destruction of defilements. A significant version of scheme 2 is the *Cūḷasuññatā-sutta*²¹⁰ which presents the four *jhānas*, the four formless attainments and the ‘signless concentration’ as the basis of insight leading to the destruction of the defilements. Unlike most descriptions of scheme 2, it is possible to trace physical seclusion within the continuum of the path described in the *Cūḷasuññatā-sutta*.

The *Cūḷasuññatā-sutta* begins by the Buddha teaching Ānanda to reflect on, how their simple forest community is devoid of the village and its people. By not paying attention to any signs of village and people, his mind rests on the unified perception of the forest.²¹¹ *Samādhi* proceeds as successive stages of simplifying the mind by emptying it of disturbances (*darathā*) and concentrating on what remains in its awareness (its ‘non-emptiness’ or what is ‘non-absent’). This process continues with the perception of earth through each stage of the formless meditations: the perception of the sphere of infinite space (*ākāśānañcāyatanaññā*), of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatanaññā*), of nothingness (*ākīñcaññāyatanaññā*) and of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaññā*). Progressing this way, he understands that each level of consciousness is empty of all disturbances associated with the previous stage. He also perceives what is not absent in each stage (its non-emptiness) as a unified consciousness or ‘oneness’ (*ekatta*) that is dependent on whatever, albeit highly refined, object of experience it rests upon. The path describes purification of mental experience through the attenuation of stimuli that hinders any further refinement of mental processes. The simplification of each stage is then the object of unified awareness. At each level of mental seclusion, the meditator’s mind ‘is progressively purified (*pasīdati*), stilled (*santiṭṭhati*) and freed (*vimuccati*)’²¹² suggesting successive stages of integration with the

²⁰⁹ Four *jhānas*, four formless attainment and the cessation of perception and feeling. Gethin counts that this scheme occurs a total of thirty-two times in D, M and A. *Schemes of the Buddhist Path*, p. 38.

²¹⁰ M III 104-09.

²¹¹ Before this, the Buddha describes how even the *bhikkhu* community is devoid of signs as a ‘oneness’, M I 104, 12-18. Even though of course, each monk is different, one recognises a uniformity in the presence of monks assembled together, possibly for evening meditation.

²¹² E.g. M I 104, 21.

mind's basic radiance but also greater levels of calm and insight required for final liberation.²¹³

The *Cūlasuññatā-sutta* describes meditative seclusion as a wholly mental practice of emptiness contemplation. Unlike in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, where physical seclusion appears in a formula of frequenting secluded places,²¹⁴ *kāyaviveka* as a distinct stage is not made explicit. Instead, the Buddha's instruction is to not 'pay attention to perceptions of the village or people'. The mind 'leaps into' (*pakkhandati*)²¹⁵ the perception of the forest and progress is described as a 'descent into emptiness' (*suññatāvakkanti*).²¹⁶ Seclusion in this text is wholly psychological and the process of gradually emptying the mind and perceiving more simplified internal vistas is still possible without leaving the crowd. Seclusion as purely mental is consonant with the notion of the mind having 'retreated' (*nikatṭha*) from thoughts of sensuality, ill-will and harm and possessing their opposites. Whilst this is possible when body and mind have both 'retreated' — where the former is explained by way of the *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula — it is also possible without *kāyaviveka*.²¹⁷

In the *Cūlasuññatā-sutta*, we can conceive 'right solitude' as not necessarily being prescribed upon *kāyaviveka* and the notion of being 'alone' appears wholly metaphorical. Referencing the *sutta*, Ian Harris suggested that the forest is 'insubstantial' and soteriologically 'irrelevant'.²¹⁸ Nevertheless, there is still a deeply practical aspect at play. The *Cūlasuññatā-sutta* describes the path as a process of simplification of consciousness beginning with an instruction of how the experience of simpler, less crowded settings is suggestive of a literal movement to the forest. Indeed, physical

²¹³ After emptying his mind of the sphere of stage of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, the meditator enters the signless concentration of mind (*animitta cetosamādhi*). Being dependent on nothing but the six sense bases conditioned by his life force, this too is perceived as oneness. At this most subtle level of consciousness however, knowledge is transformative. When the mind is empty of the most subtle of disturbances, he understands that what is not absent from his mind arises from conditions, is subject to change and as such is impermanent. Not only is this experience unconstructed, it is untarnished by any disturbances arising from desire, of being and ignorance. With all defilements destroyed, his 'descent into emptiness' is supreme and unsurpassed and his mind is liberated.

²¹⁴ The verb used in the *Sāmaññaphala* formula is *bhajati* — 'to partake', 'to resort', to 'love', PED s.v. *bhajati*.

²¹⁵ See above regarding *saddhā* having the characteristic of 'leaping forward'.

²¹⁶ M I 105, 3.

²¹⁷ A II 136-7.

²¹⁸ Ian Harris, 'How Environmentalist is Buddhism?', *Religion*, 21 no.2 (1991), p. 109.

seclusion as part of the continuum as set out in the *sutta*, is supported by a passage that describes how a sleepy forest-dwelling monk can still attain oneness of mind (*ekatta*) by attending to the perception of the forest.²¹⁹ Elsewhere, the ‘deliverance of mind through emptiness’ (*suññatā cetovimutti*) is presented as being predicated upon physical withdrawal, through reference to the *Sāmaññaphala* formula for *kāyaviveka*.²²⁰ Even if there is no explicit injunction for *kāyaviveka* in the *Cūlasuññatā-sutta*, we can trace a play on imagery and terminology that indicates how *ekatta* spirals inwards as both physical and mental seclusion in continuum. Such play on terminology is supported elsewhere where we find each consecutive stage of mental seclusion as ‘space’ (*okāsa*) in a ‘confinement’ (*sambādha*),²²¹ or ‘crowding’, and in the application of the term *ārakā*, ‘far from’, referring to both mental and geographical separation.²²² The notion of ‘right solitude’ without necessarily requiring *kāyaviveka* would support my earlier point on pragmatism. Whilst the extent to which forest practice is undertaken is based on moral purity and sense restraint, it is also guided by circumstances and individual strengths.

²¹⁹ A III 343, 6-11.

²²⁰ M I 297-98: ‘And what friend is the deliverance of mind through voidness? Here a bhikkhu, gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, reflects thus: ‘This is void of a self or what belongs to self.’ Translation by Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 394.

²²¹ A IV 449-51. The first to fourth *jhāna* are each an attainment of space with ‘qualification’ since each has a confinement that is examining and sustained thought, joy, happiness and form respectively. The four formless attainments are also attainments of space with ‘qualification’. Their respective confinements are the perceptions of each sphere of consciousness that remains in each case. Only when the taints are destroyed is there space without qualification. At A IV 299, 22-23 the Buddha is described as one who has discovered the attainment of space within confinement, cf. S I 48, 29.

²²² ‘Even if, oh *bhikkhus*, a *bhikkhu* should take hold of my outer robe and follow behind me step by step, yet he were covetous with a strong passion for infatuation, evil-minded, corrupted in his resolves, inattentive, unalert, unsettled in mind, scatter-minded, uncontrolled in his senses, then he would be far from me, and I from him... But if, oh *bhikkhus*, a *bhikkhu* were to live one hundred leagues away and he was not covetous, without a strong passion for infatuation, not evil-minded, uncorrupted in his resolves, his mindfulness established, alert, settled in mind, his mind one-pointed, his senses well restrained, then he would be near to me, and I to him.’ My translation of It 90-91: *saṅghātikaṇṇe ce pi bhikkhave bhikkhu gahetvā piṭṭhito anubandho assa pāde pādaṃ nikkhipanto so ca hoti abhijjhālū kāmesu tibbasārāgo vyāpannacitto paduṭṭhamanasamkappo muṭṭhassati asampajāno asamāhito vibbhantacitto pākātindriyo, atha kho so ārakā va mayhaṃ ahañca tassa....yojanasate ce pi so bhikkhave bhikkhu vihareyya, so ca hoti anabhijjhālū kāmesu na tibbasārāgo avyāpannacitto appaduṭṭhamanasamkappo upaṭṭhitasati sampajāno samāhito ekaggacitto samvutindriyo, atha kho so santike va mayhaṃ ahañca tassa. taṃ kissa hetu dhammaṃ hi so bhikkhave bhikkhu passati, dhammaṃ passanto maṃ passatī ti.*

In sum, *cittaviveka* represents further stages of purification and integration with gradually more simplified levels of experience. This process starts with access concentration leading through each of the four *jhānas* and the formless attainments. As the meditator becomes gradually more mentally ‘alone’ in stages of *cittaviveka*, it is still possible to trace how *kāyaviveka* strengthens the overall process. In the following, I will continue to explore how both ideological and practical dimensions of solitariness play out in various expressions the path and final goal.

2.6 Dwelling alone

So far, I have tried to emphasise that what I refer to as ‘right solitude’ as a process of transformation based on a refinement of experience, separation from defilements and non-sensory states of happiness. The reasons for making the distinction between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ should be clear. If physical seclusion is sufficient for liberation, all *bhikkhus* would be hermits. Whilst physical seclusion is a preliminary stage to mental seclusion, it seems to me that the idea of ‘right solitude’ must also include an implicit understanding as to why some degree of isolation can be conducive to happiness/freedom from distress and how this is brought about even at a remedial level. In the following I will continue to explore the interplay between physical and mental ‘aloneness’ and what other skilful factors orientate practising alone. I will begin with *eka* which has principal meaning as the cardinal number ‘one’, but it has a secondary adjectival meaning as ‘single’, ‘solitary’ or ‘alone’.²²³ I will show how *eka* takes both literal and metaphorical meanings that present physical and mental seclusion in continuum.

2.6.1 ekavihāriya

In the *Theranāma-sutta*,²²⁴ we hear of a *bhikkhu* called Thera, (‘Strong’ or ‘Firm’) who literally ‘dwells alone’, *ekavihāri*.²²⁵ He enters and leaves the village alone, sits alone in private (*eko raho nisīdati*) and does his walking meditation ‘alone’. In response, the

²²³ The *Udāna* commentary briefly explains some designations of *eka*, including its numerical meaning, what is considered its foremost meaning, i.e. mental concentration, *ekodibhāva* and *eka* in the sense of a lack of companion from being ‘alone and withdrawn’ (*eko vūpakaṭṭho*). Ud-a 18, 20-5.

²²⁴ S II 282-84.

²²⁵ Taken as a *bahubbīhi* compound rather than as a *kammadhāraya* which would translate as ‘same dwelling’ that occurs at Ud 59, 15 and S II 75, 11.

Buddha explains how ‘dwelling alone’ only becomes complete when one abandons the past and future. With regards to the present, ‘desire and passion regarding presently assumed states of individuality (*attabhāva*) are thoroughly controlled’.²²⁶ The Buddha goes on to proclaim that for such a person *ekavihāri* is ‘perfect in detail’.²²⁷ Thera’s solitary life is therefore not quite right. It is yet to be fully fulfilled as it would be for an *arahat* for whom craving is extinguished.

It may be tempting to conclude from the above that Thera’s practice suggests a kind of ‘wrong solitude’. Writing on how canonical passages espouse ‘ideal solitude’ as an inner withdrawal from sources of mental suffering, Wijayaratna stresses that it is not enough to be separated from physical sources of suffering. A *bhikkhu* must go on to destroy the source of all suffering — deepest mental attachment to objects.²²⁸ Treating the *Theranāma-sutta* and the *Bhaddekaratta-sutta*²²⁹ together, Bhikkhu Ñāṇānanda suggests that ‘ideal solitude’ is also characterised by an attitude of non-attachment towards practice.²³⁰ Whilst I agree that all attachments must ultimately be abandoned, this is only the case of a fully realised mind and leaves open the interpretation that the Buddha’s response is a subtle critique of Thera’s physical seclusion.

In the above *sutta*, Thera’s mode of life is neither praised nor blamed. His example can be compared to where *ekavihāri* is more clearly conceived as unskillful. For example, *ekavihāri* is conditioned by aversion as part of the harsh asceticism of the Ājīvika who prefers to ‘flee like a deer’ rather than be seen by others.²³¹ The reference to *attabhāva*²³² in the *Theranāma-sutta* instead suggests that if one remains attached to an assumed self, even in the most subtle experiences of *saṃsāra*, ‘dwelling alone’ will never be perfected. In other words, he is still in the ‘company’ of his past and future selves

²²⁶ My translation of S II 283, 33-4: *paccuppannesu ca attabhāvapaṭilābhesu chandarāgo suppaṭiviniṭto*. cf S I 5, 1-9.

²²⁷ My translation of S II 283, 34-5: *ekavihāro vitthārena paripuṇṇo hoti*;

²²⁸ Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, pp. 114-15.

²²⁹ M I 187-89.

²³⁰ ‘...one has to be “care-free” whether the solitude aimed at is physical or mental’. Bhikkhu Ñāṇānanda, *Ideal Solitude - An Exposition of the Bhaddekaratta Sutta* (Kandy: BPS, 1973), p. 7.

²³¹ ‘I was secluded, a lone-dweller, fleeing like a deer having been seen by people’. My translation of J I 390, 18-19: *pavivitto ahoṣi ekavihārī, manusse disvā migo viya palāyi*.

²³² According to the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*, *attabhāva* has three levels: the ‘gross’ (ordinary human body), ‘mind-made’ and ‘formless’ where all are to be abandoned through the Buddha’s teaching, D II 195-97.

even when he is close to the goal. It seems to me that Thera is unable to perfect *ekavihāri* not simply because of an attachment to physical separation, but rather clinging to what conditions self, ‘I am’ and pride.

How the concept of being ‘alone’ entails both *kāyaviveka* and *cittaviveka* is described in the following *Dhammapada* verse:

Sitting alone, resting alone,
walking alone unwearied,
The one alone, who controls oneself,
Would be delighted in the forest.²³³

The commentary attributes this verse to a *bhikkhu* called Ekavihāri who, like Thera mentioned in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, was known to his community as one who simply sits, walks and stands alone.²³⁴ He trains himself for the attainment of path and fruit by applying himself to the meditation object.²³⁵ Here, Ekavihāri is unequivocally praised by the Buddha, who explains that the motive of any *bhikkhu* should be seclusion by this example.²³⁶

‘Right solitude’ as it relates to both path and final goal is attributed to yet another forest monk called Ekavihāriya.²³⁷ His verses are not only consonant with the Buddha’s advice to Thera (Th 537), his transformative relationship to the remote landscape that he inhabits speaks of both *kāyaviveka* and *cittaviveka* (Th 541, 544-45) as well as seclusion from substrate, or *upādhiviveka* (Th 546). There is also an echo of the path as ‘narrow’ and undertaken alone:

May I succeed in this way.
Only I will accomplish my desire to do.
No-one makes it happen for another.²³⁸

²³³ Dhp 305. Translation by John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana, *The Dhammapada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 331.

²³⁴ Dhp-a III 471, 14-16.

²³⁵ Dhp-a III 471, 16-18.

²³⁶ *bhikkhunā nāma pavivittena bhavitabban ti*. (Reading *Be pavivi-* for *vivi-*) Dhp-a III 472, 1-2: ‘He that is a monk ought to live as a solitary’. Translation by Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 3*, p. 188.

²³⁷ Th 537-46. The commentary explains that the monk was, Tissa Kumāra, the younger brother of King Aśoka (Th-a II 227, 30).

²³⁸ My translation of Th 542:

evaṃ me kattukāmassa adhippāyo samijjhatu;
sādhayissāṃ’ ahaṃ yeva, nañño aññassa kārako.

For this forest *bhikkhu*, *kāyaviveka* is both intuitive and based on trust:

Come then, alone (*eka*) I will go
To the forest praised by the Buddha
Which is pleasant for a bhikkhu
Who is resolute and dwells alone.²³⁹

In the final *pada* of the above verse, *ekavihāri* strengthened by *pahitatta* (‘of resolute will’) speaks of more than just social isolation. This principle is explored in the commentary which suggests how more skilful motivating factors are at play:

As one whose heart is being drawn away by his long-practised inclination for seclusion, turning away from dwelling in society of one living surrounded by many people night and day, and thinking much about the happiness of seclusion, he speaks. ‘**Come then**’, is a particle with the meaning of ‘let’s go’; by it he expresses his determination that going to the forest is something to be done now. ‘**Alone I will go**’: to the forest praised, extolled, by *buddhas* because of the statement beginning with the words, ‘Householder, *Tathāgatas* delight in empty huts’, **alone**, without companion, **I will go**, will visit with the intention of dwelling [there]. Since **for one who dwells alone**, for one who lives alone by being companionless with regard to dwelling and so forth, **resolute** with a state of mind intent on nibbāna, [that is] for a monk who is practising the three trainings of the higher virtues and so forth, the forest is **pleasant**, ‘causing happiness as desired’ is the meaning.²⁴⁰

What is striking about the commentary is, firstly, how *kāyaviveka* appears as an intuitive response that draws this *bhikkhu* ineluctably away from the crowd consonant with going forth from the home. Secondly, by following this inclination, he follows in the footsteps of all *buddhas* whose delight in seclusion is an abiding pattern of their awakening. Thirdly — and yet again, rather than a change in attitude suggestive of a development of Buddhist monasticism — we see how the commentaries are consonant

²³⁹ My translation of Th 538:

*handā eko gamissāmi araṇṇaṃ buddhavaṇṇitaṃ
phāsuṃ ekavihāriṣṣa pahitattassa bhikkhuno.*

²⁴⁰ My translation of Th-a II 282, 24-35: *ciraparicitena vivekajjhāsayena ākaḍḍhiyamānahadayo so rattindivaṃ mahājanaparivutassa vasato saṅgaṇikavihāraṃ nibbindanto vivekasukhaṃ ca bahuṃ maññanto vadati. handā ti vossaggatthe nipāto, tena idāni karīyamānassa araṇṇagamanassa nicchitabhāvam āha. eko gamissāmī ti suñṇāgāre kho, gahapati, tathāgatā abhiraṃanī ti ādivacanato buddhehi vaṇṇitaṃ pasaṭṭhaṃ araṇṇaṃ eko asahāyo gamissāmi vāsādhippāyena upagacchāmi. yasmā ekavihāriṣṣa ṭhānādīsu asahāyabhāvena ekavihāriṣṣa nibbānaṃ paṭipesitacittatāya pahitattassa adhisīlasikkhādīkā tisso sikkhā sikkhato bhikkhuno araṇṇaṃ phāsu iṭṭhaṃ sukhāvahan ti attho.*

with the *nikāyas* in espousing in more detail the value of forest withdrawal and its connection with happiness and spiritual development.

From the occurrence of *pahitatta*, we can also pick out more detail of the psychological dimensions of ‘dwelling alone’ highlighting the complexities of the process of transformation. Thus, whilst the concept of ‘dwelling alone’ as *ekavihāri* represents either or all forms of seclusion, similarly to how *paviveka* can sometimes be understood, it seems that in some contexts, the same can be said of the adjective *eka*. That is, being simply ‘alone’ is not restricted to a literal meaning. The complexities inherent to ‘dwelling alone’ are elsewhere in the same collection described alongside mental qualities of harmlessness (Th 237), merit based on loving-kindness and compassion (Th 238) and wisdom through learning (Th 239). Whilst some may point out that the *Theragāthā* reflects only the most ascetic type of *bhikkhu*, the qualities listed here are relevant to any *bhikkhu*.

Elsewhere, there are examples where *eka* appears purely in a literal sense of ‘alone’ to emphasise ‘wrong solitude’. In this connection, there is a clear sense of loneliness as the absence of key spiritual qualities:

Having gone forth reflecting on the Buddha’s teaching, all alone in the delightful
wood, I dwelled tormented by associations.²⁴¹

In the following, by contrast, *eka* is used to emphasise how the Buddha’s equanimous mind transcends all feelings:

Truly, I’m untroubled, spirit,
Yet no delight is found in me.
And when I’m sitting all alone (*eka*)
Discontent doesn’t spread over me.²⁴²

But in the following example of the ordinary *bhikkhu* who takes up his daily meditation practice, the practice of *samādhi* is made explicit:

Then, having obtained alms on the occasion,
having returned alone (*eka*), one should sit down in seclusion (*rahas*)
Reflecting inwardly, one should not let one’s mind wander outside but should keep oneself
collected.²⁴³

²⁴¹ My translation of Ap II 16 v. 8 (Be), *pabbajitvā tadāpāhaṃ, cintento jinasāsanam. ekakova vane ramme, vasim samṣaggapīḷito*.

²⁴² S I 54, 21-22, Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p. 150:

²⁴³ Sn 388. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 219.

Earlier, with reference to the *Niddesa* definition of *viveka*, I discussed how *eka* appears to describe a skilful behaviour. The implication of the above verse seems to support my earlier point about the relationship of solitude and the continuous renunciation of desire. This is in turn supported by an accompanying verse to the one above that exhorts the *bhikkhu* to ‘enter for the morning meal having removed desire for sense objects.’²⁴⁴

We can also note from the above how *eka* is qualified as *kāyaviveka* by the adverb *rahas* (‘in private’).²⁴⁵ The inclusion of *rahas* reminds us that although a *bhikkhu* is dependent on others for alms, spiritual fruits are individually attained through self-effort. The principle is apparent in the following verse pair beginning with the words of Brahmin priest and followed by the Buddha:

In the forest where no song or music sounds,
A solitary (*eka*) muni has resorted to the woods!
This strikes me as a wonder — that you dwell
With joyful mind alone (*ekaka*) in the woods.

I am without longing, desireless, independent;
My vision of all things has been purified.
Having attained the auspicious — supreme enlightenment —
Self-possessed, brahmin, I meditate alone (*rahas*).²⁴⁶

Another feature of the Buddha’s reply, above, is the extent to which the awakened mind is secluded. Here, the description of the Buddha as *eka* is qualified as being the most complete sense. He is *akaṅkha* (without longing), *apiha* (desireless), *anūpaya* (independent)²⁴⁷ and *visārada* (without immaturity or self-possessed).²⁴⁸ I will return to look at further examples that help unpick the complexities of the transformation represented at the end of path. What I think is also possible to trace in the Buddha’s seclusion, and in contrast to his Brahmin interlocutor, is another dimension to the Buddha’s solitude that separates him from others. His self-awakening is not only attained

²⁴⁴ Sn 387. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 219.

²⁴⁵ The term *rahas* is employed in the stock formula for monastic cordiality which enjoins loving-kindness to be practised both openly (*paccupaṭṭhitam*) and in private (*raho*), M I 206, 20-23.

²⁴⁶ S I 181, 3-9. Translation adapted from Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p. 276.

²⁴⁷ I read *anūpayo* from Se ‘independence from craving and views’, instead of *anupayo* from Ee; CPD s.v. *an-ūpaya*.

²⁴⁸ ‘Being without immaturity’ i.e. ‘self-possessed’ or ‘confident’. Spk I 266, 1-2: *visārado ti vigata-sārajjō*.

without external guidance, privately and by himself alone, but through his solitude, he is peerless.

2.6.2 asahāya

So far, we have understood physical seclusion as a salutary part of the continuum of ‘right solitude’, especially when close associations become an impediment to *samādhi*. Indeed, in Ekavihāriya’s verses mentioned above, *eka* in its literal sense of physical seclusion is glossed as *asahāya*.²⁴⁹ The term *sahāya*, literally, ‘(one who) goes along with’ (*saha* + *√i*), means a ‘companion’ and is usually understood as a physical person.²⁵⁰ In the following we will see that even though *asahāya* means ‘without companion’, a meditator need not be alone in his/her efforts.

Although a ‘companion’ can be understood in the negative sense, it can also be understood as a righteous presence in religious life, usually as a spiritual teacher, or *kalyāṇamitta*. I am suggesting that a companion can also be interpreted figuratively as *Dhamma*. In a famous passage in the *Samyutta Nikāya* the Buddha declares that the *Dhamma* is for one with ‘good friends, good companions, good comrades’.²⁵¹ When Ānanda thinks that ‘good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship’²⁵² are half of the spiritual life, the Buddha corrects him explaining how they are the ‘entire spiritual life’.²⁵³ The Buddha explains that one equipped in this way cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path and by ‘relying on me as a good friend’, beings are freed from all forms of *dukkha*.²⁵⁴ It is interesting that what are later being referred to, are the same three terms but in abstract forms. As such, ‘spiritual companionship’, as what/who both

²⁴⁹ ‘For one alone, because of the condition of living alone, for one without companion’. My translation of Th-a II. 282,₂₃₋₄: *ekavihārībhāvena ekassa asahāyassa*.

²⁵⁰ As in the *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta* where sense pleasures are said to be the cause of quarrels between kings, between nobles, brahmins, householders, parents with sons, siblings and between companions (*sahāya*) i.e. associates, M I 86, 22-23.

²⁵¹ S I 87,₁₅₋₁₆: *kalyāṇamittassa kalyāṇasahāyassa kalyāṇasampavaṅkassa*. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses* Vol. I, p. 180.

²⁵² The terms now appear to be formulated in the abstract. See discussion in Chapter 2 on the connection between the Buddha as *kalyāṇamitta* and *asahāya* (peerless) and thus the best companion and how this might matter in relation to solitary practice.

²⁵³ S I 87-88, *kalyāṇamittatā kalyāṇasahāyatā kalyāṇasampavaṅkatā ti*. Ānanda thinks that ascetic life depends half on good companionship and half on one’s own effort. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses II*, p. 1890, n. 5.

²⁵⁴ S I 88, 22-30.

guides a *bhikkhu* and what/whom he develops trust towards — can be understood not just in terms of a teacher but the teachings themselves.

The Buddha as the paradigm of ‘spiritual companionship’ is paradoxically alluded to by the term *asahāya* that describes his unrivalled status in the world:

...there is one person arising in the world who is unique without a peer (*asahāya*), without counterpart, incomparable, matchless, unrivalled, unequalled, without equal, the foremost of bipeds.²⁵⁵

Although the Buddha is ‘companionless’ in his supreme state of awakening, he is nevertheless the perfect companion for all his followers, as explained by the commentator to the above passage:

asahāyo means he has no companion like him either in his own nature or in the *dhammas* penetrated. But according to the statement, ‘The Lord has gained the companionship of trainees on the way and ...’, those in training and those trained are called companions of the *buddhas*.²⁵⁶

If we recall the maxim, ‘seeing’ the Buddha is ‘seeing *Dhamma*’,²⁵⁷ we are reminded from the above that *nibbāna* is dependent on the Buddha as refuge whose qualities reflect the goal. The implication being that a *bhikkhu* need not be alone if he has confidence in the Buddha. This principle is most clearly present in the Buddha’s exhortation to his monks as follows:

If you have gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, and fear or trepidation or terror should arise in you, on that occasion you should reflect me thus: ‘The Blessed One is an arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.’ For when you recollect me, bhikkhus, whatever fear or trepidation or terror should arise you may have will be abandoned.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ A I 22, 22-4: *ekapuggalo bhikkhave loke uppajjamāno uppajjati adutiyo asahāyo appaṭimo appaṭisamo appaṭibhāgo appaṭi-puggalo asamo asamasamo dipadānaṃ aggo*. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, p. 108.

²⁵⁶ My translation of Mp I 115, 29-30: *asahāyo ti attabhāvena vā paṭividdhadhammehi vā sadiso sahāyo nāma assa natthī ti asahāyo. laddhasahāyo kho pana so bhagavā sekhānañ c’ eva pāṭipadānaṃ ti iminā pana pariyāyena sekhāsekhā buddhānaṃ sahāyā nāma honti*.

²⁵⁷ S III 120, 28-30: *dhammaṃ hi Vakkali passanto maṃ passati maṃ passanto dhammam passati*

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²⁵⁸ S I 219, 27-35. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p. 319.

We can, therefore, conceive of *kāyaviveka* as, metaphorically, practising with and without ‘companion’. This is because companionship has a dual meaning as what may either help or inhibit one’s spiritual efforts. In the former case, teachers persist in the life of a monk/nun as the righteous presence of wisdom and object of trust in *Dhamma*. Here we are reminded of the principle that a monk/nun is guided by both the voice of another and the voice within. It also underscores how they are ultimately reliant on their self-efforts when those that teach them are not physically present.

We can, therefore, include within the notion of ‘right solitude’, trust in the Buddha and the teachings as refuges when alone. According to Buddhaghosa, a *bhikkhu* (i.e. a meditator) should ask for a meditation object from his teacher and ‘dedicate’ himself to the Buddha.²⁵⁹ By doing so, he should know that joy will arise in him and by not doing so, he would be unable to endure the challenges of forest practice. Otherwise, fear would lead him back to the village.²⁶⁰ Therefore, when separated from spiritual teachers, the Buddha and *Dhamma* are constant companions in the religious life — the spiritual companion that is the ‘entire holy life’. The lone *bhikkhu/bhikkhū* who takes refuge in the Buddha, *Dhamma* and the *Saṅgha*, is therefore never separated from his/her community. Conversely, even though the Buddha is seen to enjoy seclusion in remote places, he is never ‘alone’ from those that follow him.

2.6.3 *adutiya*

Included as one of the epithets of the Buddha mentioned at A I 22 quoted above is the term *adutiya*. Although Bhikkhu Bodhi translates *adutiya* as ‘unique’ in the passage, it literally means without a ‘second’ or ‘partner’.²⁶¹ More regularly it is metaphorically taken to mean ‘without craving’.

In the *Migajāla-sutta*²⁶² of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, ‘dwelling alone’ as *ekavihārī* is directly contrasted to *sadutiya vihārī* (‘living with a partner’). A *bhikkhu* who is ‘bound by the fetter of delight’ (*nandisaṃyojanasaṃyutto*)²⁶³ is said to ‘dwell with a partner’ and takes his ‘partner’ or craving with him when he lives alone in solitary meditation. Thus, the discourses again appear to articulate ‘wrong solitude’ where the

²⁵⁹ Vism 115, 13-14: ‘Blessed One, I relinquish this my person to you’.

²⁶⁰ Vism 115, 16-7.

²⁶¹ *dutiya* as a ‘partner’ refers to a wife or consort, PED, s.v. *dutiya*. See S I 200, 8 for example.

²⁶² S IV 35-37.

²⁶³ S IV 36, 8.

focus is on desire directed towards sense objects (rather than attachment to a view of self, as for the monk called Thera). This kind of ‘wrong solitude’ is elsewhere evoked through imagery of *bhikkhus* who succumb to lust like ill-equipped ‘warriors’ who are consequently defeated in the battle.²⁶⁴ There is a higher price to pay for those who are secluded in the forest only to break their vow of chastity compared to those who capitulate to desire at the mere thought or sight of the opposite sex, before he is even able to practice seclusion.

From the above we have an example of how, yet again, figurative notions of seclusion are articulated with reference to concrete domains. The stress on dual layers of meaning is what maintains *kāyaviveka* and *cittaviveka* in continuum and how living ‘without a partner’ becomes a constant. Whilst Steven Collins is correct to say that perpetual social seclusion for a *bhikkhu* is neither possible nor expected,²⁶⁵ it is also the case that *ekavihārī* in the perfected sense of living without craving is the reality of either an *arahat* or a *buddha*. ‘True aloneness’, according to Collins, is the fact of a *bhikkhu*’s mental non-attachment and not his physical condition. Yet, the texts appear to stress ‘right solitude’, as I prefer to call it, through repeated evocation of concrete domains. The same can be said of the term *adutiya*, as in the following example:

The sky rains down, like a beautiful song,
My little hut is roofed and pleasant,
Sheltered from the wind.
I dwell there without a partner (*adutiya*):
Rain, sky, if you please!²⁶⁶

A sense on the play of meanings of *adutiya* is also intimated in the *Aṅgulimāla-sutta*. On seeing the Buddha approaching him, the robber remarks ‘but now this recluse comes alone, unaccompanied (*adutiya*), as if driven by fate’.²⁶⁷ The Buddha approaches Aṅgulimāla physically alone. Nevertheless, the use of *adutiya* betrays a deeper meaning to the Buddha’s liberated state. It is also worthwhile noting that

²⁶⁴ A III 89-93.

²⁶⁵ Collins, *Buddhist Monachism*, p. 109.

²⁶⁶ My translation of Th 54:

*vassati devo yathā sugītaṃ, channā me kuṭikā sukhā nivātā,
tassaṃ viharāmi adutiyo, atha ce patthayasi pavassa devā ti.*

²⁶⁷ M II 99, 3-4: *atha ca panāyaṃ samaṇo eko adutiyo pasayha maññe āgacchati*. Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 711.

2.7 Alone at the end of the path

In the following, I will explore a *sutta* as a vignette of many of the themes discussed in this chapter as precursor to exploring more expansive meanings of solitariness as it relates to liberated beings. The *sutta* appears in the *Mucalinda-vagga* of the *Udāna* in which the verse parts of most of its discourses are linked by the theme of *sukha*, happiness or bliss.²⁷¹ The *udāna* is uttered by a former king turned *bhikkhu*, named Bhaddiya Kālīgodhāya.²⁷² Whatever secluded place that Bhaddiya would retire to, he could frequently be heard speaking words of joy, ‘Oh bliss! Oh bliss!’ (*aho sukhaṃ aho sukhaṃ*), by his fellow *bhikkhus*. Knowing Bhaddiya’s royal patronage, those *bhikkhus* assume that he must be privately reminiscing the happiness of his former life as a king. ‘Bhaddiya, Kālīgodhā’s son’ they surmise, ‘undoubtedly does not delight in practising the spiritual life (*brahmacariya*)’. But Bhaddiya explains that previously as a king, despite having the protection of guards arranged thoroughly outside his private quarters, inside the city, outside the city and throughout his kingdom, he lived gripped by fear and suspicion. The *sutta* continues by evoking the *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula for physical seclusion to foreground Bhaddiya’s solitude:

But now I, Lord, though gone to the forest, though gone to the root of a tree, though gone to some empty place, dwell alone (*ekako*), unfearful, unanxious, unsuspecting, not terrified, unconcerned, unruffled, living off that given by others, with a heart as that of a deer. It was perceiving this overriding interest, Lord, that I, though gone to forest, though gone to the root of a tree, though gone to some empty place, constantly gave rise to this *Udāna*: ‘Ah bliss! Ah bliss!’²⁷³

²⁷¹ Ud 18-20. Although the *sutta* ends with an ‘inspired utterance’ by the Buddha about one who is without fear, the main theme of happiness is expressed later in a separate *udāna* by the *arahat* Bhaddiya. The *sutta* is one of only two in the entire collection that contain a solemn utterance attributed to someone other than the Buddha.

²⁷² According to a longer version of the story in the *Cullavagga* of the *Vinaya*, Bhaddiya Kālīgodhā was one of six Sākiyan princes including Ānanda, Anuruddha, Bhagu, Kimbila and Devadatta, who went forth at the same time and were ordained by the Buddha, (Vin II 182ff). Bhaddiya also has verses in the *Theragāthā* (Th 842-65) and his story occasions the telling of the *Sukhavihārī Jātaka*, (J I 140-2) about an unnamed king turned *bhikkhu* who utters the same *udāna*.

²⁷³ Translation by Peter Masefield, *The Udāna* (Oxford: PTS, 1994), p. 31: Ud 19, 29-33: *etarahi kho pan’ āhaṃ bhante araṇṇagato pi rukkhamaḷagato pi suṇṇāgāragato pi ekako abhūto anubbiggo anussaṅkī anutrasto apposukko pannalomo paradattavutto (paravutto) migabhūtena cetasā viharāmi. imaṃ kho ahaṃ bhante atthavaṣaṃ sampassamāno araṇṇagato . . . pe . . . udānesiṃ: . . . sukhan ti.*

What is striking about this *sutta* is how solitude is narrated by both a radical simplification of circumstances and inner peace. Previously, as a king, Bhaddiya is never alone yet his fear betrays his loneliness, seen as a need for constant protection. Yet as an *arahat*, he has abandoned his kingdom and finds comfort in the forest. Just as the forest is empty of people and distractions, his mind is purified from fear and anxiety. He is *abhīto*, ‘free from fear’ and *anussāṅkī*, ‘not-suspicious’.²⁷⁴ *Pannalomo*, literally ‘(one whose) hair is fallen’, speaks both of deep states of relaxation and lasting therapeutic relief but also of the sublime effects of meditative happiness. Seclusion is no longer associated with fear and confinement but with confidence and freedom.

Even though physical seclusion is particularly emphasised in the *sutta* as a radical change in physical location, this change is coupled with an inner psychological transformation. Firstly, prior to renunciation, misery appears to increase in direct proportion to the crowd just as guards encircle and expand around a king increasingly gripped by fear and suspicion. Being surrounded by people may allay immediate threats, but it does nothing to resolve deep attachments that are never satisfied. The king’s ‘private quarters’ (*ante-pura*)²⁷⁵ is both a literal place but also a subtle reference to his mental condition — fear and suspicion and his need for protection. Secondly, leaving the crowd behind for the seclusion of the forest and other empty places is directly linked with happiness and lasting peace. The *sutta* employs the adjectival expression *ekaka*²⁷⁶ juxtaposed with accompanying wholesome states. The forest is a literal place away from

²⁷⁴ CPD s.v. *ussāṅki*.

²⁷⁵ ‘The inner apartments of the palace, the harem’. CPD s.v. *ante-pura*

²⁷⁶ In the translation above, Peter Masfield appears to translate *ekaka* as an adverb ‘I dwell...alone’, but *ekaka* is clearly agreeing with its antecedents as an adjective which seems to be the way *ekaka* is used elsewhere. If *ekaka* is used adverbially, we would expect to find the construction *ekakaṃ* (i.e. in neuter accusative singular). However, *ekakaṃ* is only used as an adjective in the occurrences of *ekakaṃ* that I could find. For example, at DhP-a I 430 (Be): *taṃ ekakaṃ na vissajjessāma ti*, (‘We will not let you go alone’) *ekakaṃ* agrees with *taṃ*. See also J VI 19, 18. Regardless of whether *ekaka* is translated into English as an adjective or adverb, changes to the syntactic category do not affect the core meaning. Interestingly, the English word ‘alone’ can be interpreted as either an adjective or an adverb and both have been argued as such by syntacticians and theoretical linguists. Those who argue that ‘alone’ is not an adjective would cite the impossibility of the construction ‘the alone monk.’ Those who argue that ‘alone’ is an adjective might cite how ‘asleep’ works in the same way but ‘asleep’ is still clearly an adjective. But ‘the asleep/alone monk’ construction is avoided because of prosodic factors that favour weak-strong-weak syllable patterns. In the example, ‘The (weak) a-(weak) lone (strong)...’ pattern is avoided in English. I am grateful to Maria Black, a theoretical and clinical linguist, for pointing this out to me.

the community but metaphorically linked with healing and liberation. However, the *arahat*'s physical separation goes beyond the therapeutic effects of abandoning the restrictions of worldly life. Mental afflictions are completely uprooted, he lives without fear (*vigatabhaya*) and his laments for protection are replaced by his *udāna* of happiness, suggestive of the mind's radiant depths. Yet the imagery of this *sutta* evokes another dimension to solitariness. That is how the lasting happiness of *nibbāna* is not a social kind. Not only is Bhaddiya physically isolated from other monks, he is psychologically separated from the ordinary consciousness of those who dwell in the group.

What can be clearly traced in the above passage is how 'wrong' solitude becomes 'right' through both physical and mental separation in continuum. We could read Bhaddiya's experience of kingship metaphorically as a false sense of security or even a kind of madness. Through the contrast between physical protection (or the feeling of its lack) and sitting alone in an empty place, the path from misery to happiness is evoked through concrete domains. Although the *sutta* does not elaborate the methods, the *Bhayabherava-sutta* is clearly helpful in understanding how fear in unfamiliar and terrifying places is stilled through meditative exertion, concentration and mindfulness. Similarly, in the *Mahāsudassana-sutta*, a king's meditative journey through the *jhānas* and *brahmavihāras* is narrated from the perspective of his retreat within the various confines of his citadel.²⁷⁷ Residing 'alone' in a 'room' is reminiscent of how each stage of mental seclusion is metaphorically finding 'space' in 'confinement'. Physically stepping away from the crowd to meditate alone is clearly a supportive stage in overcoming mental stress. Yet the psychological effects of seclusion remind us how metaphorical notions of seclusion are embedded in literal descriptions.

Solitude has been mainly defined as relative stages of seclusion from unwholesome states that give rise to progressive stages of happiness. I have stressed the constant interplay between abstract notions of spiritual fulfilment and the concrete domain of the forest and other secluded places. Among the terms we have encountered are *eka* and *vūpakaṭṭha*; neither of which are limited to a single meaning. The two terms are evoked together in a stock description for arahatship that appears scattered across the *nikāyas* describing how a *bhikkhu* is 'alone, withdrawn' and in the final stages of awakening.

²⁷⁷ D II 169-219.

What I refer to as the stock description of arahatship essentially describes a basic pattern to the liberation of the Buddha's followers (*sāvakas*). Final liberation is at once dependent on renunciation under the dispensation of the Buddha and reliance on one's own efforts, as in the case of Subaddha, the last to be ordained by the Buddha:

So Subhadda the wanderer received the going-forth and higher ordinations in the presence of the Blessed One. Straight after he had been ordained, the venerable Subhadda withdrew alone (*eko vūpakaṭṭho*), and living attentive (*appamatto*), determined (*ātāpī*), and resolute (*pahitatto*), he soon lived here and now having attained the ultimate goal of the spiritual life, experiencing it for himself through direct knowledge — the goal for the sake of which sons of families properly go forth from the household life into homelessness. He understood: 'Birth is destroyed, the spiritual life lived, done is what was to be done — there is nothing further required to this end!²⁷⁸

It must be noted that the above is not the only description of arahatship in the canon. From elsewhere, a graduated teaching can lead to awakening as in the case of thirty *bhikkhus* liberated during a teaching by the Buddha.²⁷⁹ Nonetheless, living 'alone' and 'withdrawn' clearly underly basic themes encountered in this chapter of how the path and goal relate to complete and full seclusion from mental defilements. In the case of Anuruddha, furthermore, the stock description of arahatship appears alongside the final abandoning of all remaining taints in his mind.²⁸⁰ Sometimes the stock phrase appears in a step-by-step process that reveals a maturity in understanding. A *bhikkhu* asks the Buddha for a teaching so that he may live 'alone, withdrawn, attentive, ardent and resolute'. The Buddha gives a teaching in brief and the *bhikkhu* responds that he/she understands. The Buddha then asks his disciple in what way he understands the detailed meaning of what was stated in brief. The *bhikkhu* explains giving more detail to the teaching. The Buddha confirms that the *bhikkhu* understands the detail of his teaching and then teacher and disciple part company. After some time, the *bhikkhu* attains arahatship dwelling 'alone, withdrawn, attentive, ardent and resolute'.²⁸¹ For some followers who are on the cusp of liberating knowledge, some further effort is clearly required. However, their knowledge is sufficient for them to strive independently of the teacher. Although there is some work still left to do, it is done alone. Final consummation

²⁷⁸ D II 153, 1-9. Translation by Gethin, *Sayings of the Buddha*, p. 88.

²⁷⁹ S II 187-89.

²⁸⁰ A I 282, 21-23.

²⁸¹ E.g. at S III 73-74.

of the path and ‘direct knowledge’ leading to seclusion from all states of greed, hatred and delusion is when all factors of the path are made full and complete.²⁸²

The above stock phrase reflects how the path of an ordinary monastic can be conceived as ‘lonely’, most noticeably in advanced stages. As we noted in Chapter 1, one who has attained stream entry (*sotāpanna*) or above is no longer dependent on a teacher and arahatship may swiftly follow after a further teaching. A similar interpretation of the *arahat* as one ‘going alone’ can be read in the epithet: *ekāra*.

The term *ekāra* is very rare in the Pāli Canon. It appears in the *Kāmaabhū-sutta* in the phrase *ekāro ratho* referring to a ‘single-spoked chariot’:²⁸³

With faultless wheel and white awning,
The **one-spoked** chariot rolls.
See it coming, trouble-free,
The stream cut, without bondage.²⁸⁴

According to the *sutta*, *ekāra* refers to mindfulness.²⁸⁵ K. Nizamis has suggested that if the wheel represents *Dhamma*, then its ‘single spoke’ might be referring to a certain kind of ‘spoke’.²⁸⁶ As ‘constant mindfulness’, this ‘spoke’ is the one most naturally associated with an *arahat*.²⁸⁷ Nizamis goes on to offer an alternative suggestion based on a reading of *ekāra* as *eka* (‘alone’) + *ara* from √*r* (‘going’).²⁸⁸ Nizamis draws on imagery from the

²⁸² As in all seven sets of the awakening factors, D II 119-20.

²⁸³ ‘Having a single spoke’, CPD s.v. *ekāra*. Cone’s DOP does not appear to comment on *ekāra* but only defines *ara* as ‘spoke’.

²⁸⁴ S IV 291, 19-22. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p. 1321.

²⁸⁵ S IV 292, 4; *ekāro ti kho bhante satiyā etam adhivacanam*.

²⁸⁶ ‘So, one could perhaps say that there is only *one* kind of ‘spoke’ (rather than, literally, just ‘one spoke’) in the ‘wheel’ of the Arahant’s practice, namely mindfulness. Nevertheless, this is a rather abstract interpretation.’ K. Nizamis, ‘Pathama Kamabhu: About Kamabhu (1)’ (SN 41.5), *Access to Insight (BCBS Edition)*, 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn41/sn41.005.niza.html>, see n. 3. Accessed July 2019.

²⁸⁷ In trying to interpret *ekāra* as ‘mindfulness’, it may be helpful to recall that a ‘chariot’ is used elsewhere as a metaphor for a ‘being’ (S I 135, 20-1) as a conditionally arisen collection of parts. Along with ‘house’, ‘hut’, ‘boat’ and ‘cave’, a ‘chariot’ is also interpreted as a figurative representation of *attabhāva*, especially in relation to the physical body (Th I-a 29, 1-2). From elsewhere, body is to be understood with wisdom as a mere collection of parts and conditioned by ignorance and craving (S II 23-34). A ‘moving chariot’ could so be interpreted as the constant awareness of the conditioned body.

²⁸⁸ MW s.v. *r* ‘to go, move, rise, tend upwards’. Note also that MW s.v. *ara* states ‘ifc., “going” cf. *samara*’, suggesting that there are other examples of *ara* at the end of a compound in the sense of ‘going’.

Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya-sutta where the same verse quoted above appears as an *udāna* uttered by the Buddha about the *arahat* Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya.²⁸⁹ The *sutta* does not attempt to define *ekāra* but explains that Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya is a hunchbacked dwarf who is avoided by the other monks. Seen trailing far behind the others, the Buddha declares that despite Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya's uncommon appearance, he is a fully realised *bhikkhu* of 'great power and authority' (*mahiddhiko mahānubhavo*). Nizamis uses the image of Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya's distance from the other monks to explain how *ekāra* is thus compatible with his first alternative suggestion, 'going alone'.

Nizamis's analysis seems to support the notion of solitude as a rich and more nuanced concept. Although we may not know for certain if the above interpretation of *ekāra* is correct, it is clearly supportive of my point of how the interplay between literal and metaphorical is discernible at all stages of seclusion in the path. I would also add how this interplay is also conceivable at the end of the path. Taking the unique imagery of the *arahat* Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya to make this point, Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya, like Bhaddiya, is not only psychologically 'separated' from other *bhikkhus* in his solitude, he is also physically separately from them. However, this does not contradict the basic tenet that an *arahat*'s happiness is independent of his location.²⁹⁰ Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya's case suggests, in a particularly striking way, how the solitude of all *arahats* is not only the ultimate level of psychological seclusion, it is not of a relational kind. Put another way, 'right solitude' as the ultimate ineffable experience of *nibbāna* is an unconditioned state of happiness, independent and untarnished by anyone and anything.

2.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to trace notions of 'right solitude' in relation to the third and fourth noble truths. I have focussed on the meditative aspects of the path in classically described in the *sīlakkhandavagga* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* together with its variant path schemes with a focus on the *samādhi* and *paññā*. I have identified solitude mainly in terms of 'seclusion' (or 'separation') and 'oneness' together with relative stages of spiritual happiness. I have also traced the notion of 'right solitude' in terms of a practice of seclusion that leads one away from suffering and closer to its cessation.

²⁸⁹ Ud 76, 26-7.

²⁹⁰ S I 233, 3-4.

‘Right solitude’ as the experience of happiness in tune with the mind’s radiant nature begins with physical seclusion, continues in ‘access concentration’, through all stages of *jhāna* and the formless attainments.

I have traced ‘wrong solitude’ to a variety of paradigms. When identified with other ascetic practices, it is most prominently perceived as an aversion to people or attachment to a particular practice or with clinging to the sense of ‘I am’. It can also be seen as feeling of loneliness both in isolation and when one is amongst the crowd. From the mistaken reaction of the other *bhikkhus* to Bhaddiya’s *udāna*, one could construe that, on one hand, any happiness arising as a result of physical separation must effectively be an artefact of being ‘connected’ to the world rather than being ‘separated’ from it. Whether it is longing for objects or indulging in memories, it is a mistake to perceive that it is these that lead to personal happiness. This kind of ‘wrong seclusion’ is closely linked with *sadutiyaivihārī* — ‘living with craving’, where one may be ‘separated’ but still ‘attached’.

The terms *kāyaviveka* and *cittaviveka* refer to continuous stages in the experience of ‘right solitude’. This continuum is inherent in the terms *eka*, *paviveka* and *paṭisallāna* which integrate metaphorical and literal dimensions into a single concept. *Kāyaviveka* is singled out as a prerequisite for subsequent stages of purification whereby the hindrances lose their grip under calm attention and presence of mind, just as the sustained presence of light is a natural germicidal property in disinfecting water. I have tried to give more attention to the value of physical seclusion which has, hitherto, been lacking in scholarship. By identifying key formulae for *kāyaviveka*, I have presented as full a picture as possible of the extent to which *suttas* express the need for physical seclusion, especially as part of gradual schemes of the path. I have suggested that the value of *kāyaviveka* in the *sīlakkhandavagga* goes beyond the simple description of a place for seated meditation. The proximity of *kāyaviveka* to the process of stilling the causes of mental stress presupposes a practice that is steered by recognising the remedial effects of simpler and quieter settings. Experiential understanding of this encourages the greater awareness that, even though perpetual separation is not required, frequent and regular retreat and time alone is conducive as a preliminary stage to deeper calm and insight. This way, *kāyaviveka* is consonant with the overall process of separation and oneness through which the experience of simpler settings brings about immediate benefits by bringing relief to emotional stress.

By focussing on the extent to which formulae for *kāyaviveka* repeat and combine as part of what I call ‘right’ solitude, I have tried to highlight how, according to a cross-section of the *nikāyas*, prescriptions for the practice of physical seclusion appear as a distinct perspective or ‘voice’ from within the sources. I have suggested that the term *āraññaka* or ‘forest-dweller’ may be less about a particular type of monk who stands separate to the ‘village-scholar’ type, and more of a paradigm that underscores how some form of physical seclusion is required for meditation. This paradigm is underpinned by the ascetic determination towards a simplification of inner experience through sustained separation from the unwholesome and cultivation/integration with the wholesome.

Separation and oneness that continue through stages of *cittaviveka* give rise to and sustain the experience of the mind’s radiant depths. At even deeper stages of *samādhi*, ‘right solitude’ appears wholly metaphorical. Nevertheless, passages that describe these stages of mental seclusion are evoked by more images of the forest.

Examining the play on dual aspects of seclusion in terminology across other passages also tells us that ‘right solitude’ is warranted on a number of spiritual factors also being present and integrated into practice. Relevant also are the terms *asahāya* and *adutiya*. Each has a dual meaning that can be interpreted as part of the notion of ‘right solitude’. A ‘companion’ (*sahāya*) is a spiritual friend that, as a person or *Dhamma* itself, can fruitfully support the experience of physical seclusion. A ‘partner’ (*dutiya*) is usually understood figuratively as ‘craving’ with the opposite sex as its literal referent, but also can be positively evoked as ‘trust/confidence’. Other skilful factors include mindfulness, desirelessness and energy. Although in many cases, the processes inherent to ‘right solitude’ involving both *kāyaviveka* and *cittaviveka* are depicted in the ascetic vision of the *Theragāthā*, the complexities of what is inherent in the process are not the reserve of a particular ascetic type but can equally apply to all meditating monks and nuns.

I have also identified a number of further abstract notions of solitariness in descriptions of those at advanced stages of the path and how have reached the goal itself. ‘Self-reliance’, discussed in Chapter 1, can be traced in a stock description of arahatship which describes how a *bhikkhu* on the threshold of liberation goes ‘alone’ to the goal. Additional qualities pertaining to fully liberated minds are expressed in terms of seclusion from all levels of attachment (*upādhiviveka*). The *arahat* is fearless, independent and self-possessed. The happiness uttered by the *arahat* Bhaddiya also speak of unity with the mind’s radiant depths permanently secluded from all defilements. I have also suggested that, at least from some aspects of the canon, the picture of solitude

that emerges at the end of the path is precisely in tune with the nature of the path itself envisaged through physical and mental seclusion. This is not to say that a *buddha* or *arahat* is asocial, but rather that the lasting happiness of *nibbāna* is conditioned by neither gain nor loss nor any social experience.

Chapter 3

‘Living Alone’: The *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* and Tales of *paccekabuddhas*

*Putting aside harm to all beings
Not injuring any one of them
With a loving mind, friendly and compassionate
One should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.¹*

3.1 Introduction

With the help of imagery and word play, the simple concept of being ‘alone’ is not limited to one meaning. Solitude according to the Pāli literary imagination is different to its popular meaning and takes expression in several abstract forms, sometimes through poetic expression. We have also noticed the use of verbs with both active and stative meanings. Principal translations of *viharati* and *gacchati* are ‘to live’ and ‘to go’ but they both evoke secondary meanings of ‘to behave’ and ‘to experience’ respectively. Existing translations sometimes miss the nuance of these layers of meaning. Another important term that appears in the Pāli Canon that is to be read in this way is *ekacariyā*. The use of *ekacariyā*, ‘living/practising alone/singly’ in the primary four *nikāyas* is rare, but it is most prominent in the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* or the ‘Discourse on the Rhinoceros’s horn’. Here, we encounter the repeated refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇa kappo*: ‘one should live alone like a rhinoceros’s horn’. The ascetic practice of forest-dwelling has, in the main, been assumed to be the point of the *sutta*. However, scholarship relating to the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* has been vexed by two main questions. Firstly, is the original meaning of the compound *khaggavisāṇa*, and hence the referent for ‘living alone’, the rhinoceros or more specifically its horn?² Secondly, is the traditional connection between

¹ My translation of Ap I 8, v. 8 (*Paccekabuddhāpadāna*).

² This debate can be traced to the earliest translations of the *Suttanipāta*, as W. Norman Brown’s review of Robert Chalmers’ 1933 translation shows. W. Norman Brown, ‘Review of Buddha’s Teachings, being the Sutta-Nipāta or Discourse-Collection by Lord Chalmers’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 54 no. 2 (1934), 218-19. doi:10.2307/594647. For a good summary of the questions and issues, see Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, pp. 98-103.

the ostensibly solitary lifestyle espoused by the *sutta* and commentarial explanation of *paccekabuddhas* — ‘solitary *buddhas*’ — acceptable? Whilst the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* is considered more recently in Buddhist scholarship as an ‘old chestnut’, I suggest it deserves more than a passing comment in this study. In this chapter, I will provide an exposition of the verses together with a critical review of literature in order to advance my own thesis as well as to offer a fresh perspective as to how this particular discourse was first intended to be understood.

My main question in this chapter is: how are we to understand *ekacariyā* in its most famous occurrence in the verses of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*? I will argue why *khaggavisāṇa-kappo*, or ‘like the rhinoceros’s horn’, is consonant with *ekacariyā* as a more expansive concept. This concept undoubtedly includes literal or physical solitude but includes other significant features which I suggest make the *sutta* more comprehensive as an expression of the renunciate path more generally. I will begin by briefly looking at how other occurrences of *ekacariyā* in the *nikāyas* permit both literal and figurative meanings. I will then examine the verses of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* to classify its various themes. I will identify how renunciate life in general, as well as solitude, forms a particularly dominant motif of the verses. I will suggest that the concept of *ekacariyā* in the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* can be better understood in terms of a ‘single’ or ‘narrow’ path that is contingent on physical seclusion and self-effort. Next, I will examine how renunciation is also a central motif of the commentarial narratives of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*. This will lead me to offer further consideration as to why the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* became associated with *paccekabuddhas* fairly early in Buddhism. I will suggest that *ekacariyā* in the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* is perhaps better translated as ‘practising singly’ to reflect the theme of the ‘lonely path’ as a general principle and not just the perspective of the more ascetic type.

I will touch upon past scholarship whilst benefitting from the works of three scholars in particular. Richard Salomon’s translation and study of the *Gāndhārī* version of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* provides a limited analysis but a good starting point for my own treatment.³ Salomon’s study and translation of the *Gāndhārī* version of the *sutta* has allowed scholarship to further appreciate how the verses of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*

³ Richard Salomon, *A Gāndhārī Version of the Rhinoceros Sūtra* (Seattle: University of Washington, 2000).

remained relevant and vital to later strands of Buddhism.⁴ Dhivan Thomas Jones provides a critical review of the philological arguments related to the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇa-kappo*.⁵ Jones assessment together with consideration of other evidence leads him to conclude that ‘rhinoceros’ is an equally valid translation of *khaggavisāṇa* as ‘rhinoceros’s horn’. In addition, Naomi Appleton’s recent *jātaka*-related studies have been instrumental in offering a fresh perspective into the nature of *paccekabuddhas*. Appleton’s exploration of themes and motifs from *jātaka* stories shows how *paccekabuddhas* appear as liminal figures in narratives.⁶ Using the *jātakas* and the commentary to the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*, Appleton also argues how stories of *paccekabuddhas* show them to be neither consistently ‘solitary’ nor ‘silent’.⁷ Her argument inspires further questions about the overall theme of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* and what it is instead about *paccekabuddhas* that links them to its verses. Whilst Appleton does not fully explore this connection, her studies bring attention to the motif of renunciation which orientates my own study into the application of *ekacariyā* as a concept.

One of the reasons why scholars have side-stepped the relevance of *paccekabuddhas* in their studies of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* may be because, as Bhikkhu Bodhi points out, the *sutta* itself does not make reference to any *paccekabuddhas*.⁸ N. A. Jayawickrama, as another scholar who disregarded the connection to *paccekabuddhas*, classifies the *sutta* as ‘*muni-class*’.⁹ However, Jayawickrama omits to mention that the verses explicitly mention *munis* (‘silent sages’). In a more recent article, G. A. Somaratne also rejects the commentarial view and reiterates the views of several past scholars that

⁴ Salomon, *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, p. 16.

⁵ Dhivan Thomas Jones, ‘Like the Rhinoceros, or Like Its Horn? The Problem of *Khaggavisāṇa* Revisited’, *Buddhist Studies Review*, 31 no. 2 (2015), 165-178.

⁶ They are liminal in the sense that they occupy a status between *arahats* and full *buddhas* but also in that they appear as interim figures in stories that narrate periods when neither *arahats* nor *buddhas* can exist. Naomi Appleton, ‘*Jātaka* Stories and *Paccekabuddhas* in Early Buddhism’, *Buddhist Studies Review*, No. 35 1-2 (2018), 279-92.

⁷ Naomi Appleton, ‘Dialogues with Solitary Buddhas’, in *In Dialogue with Classical Indian Traditions: Encounter, Transformation and Interpretation*, ed. by Brian Black, Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 36-50. Some *paccekabuddhas* communicate with other renunciators by teaching through signs.

⁸ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 100.

⁹ N. A. Jayawickrama, ‘A critical Analysis of the *Sutta Nipata*’, *Pali Buddhist Review* 2, no. 1 (1977), 42-54, p. 26.

the verses ennoble renunciation and solitary life over family and social life.¹⁰ Reflecting the ‘established’ view, Somaratne is in polar opposition to Shayne Clarke who argues that the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* has often been used by scholars to privilege the solitary ideal within its purview as the de facto image of Buddhist ascetic life.¹¹ Clarke argues that the *sutta* is better understood as ‘ascetic rhetoric’ of a particular stratum of Buddhist literature. He echoes the claim by some past scholars that ascetic separation is much more of an ideal. For Clarke, the *sutta*-centric vision of monks and nuns who would have followed the solitary ideals of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* would have left traces in ‘the sands of history’ as the ‘lonely’ rhinoceros itself, only later to be well concealed.¹² The footprints of the Buddhist renouncers in the Pāli Canon may have been washed away over time, but at least they are acknowledged to have been there in the first place. As argued throughout this study, they lived on in the imagination of compilers of early Buddhist discourse, poetry and storytelling and have inspired modern-day renouncers. I suggest that the *sutta* tell us much about the importance of solitude as a concept in some parts of the Pāli Canon. My intention in revisiting this enigmatic poem is to respond both supportively and critically to these studies in light of a less restricted understanding of *ekacariyā* and an attempt to address the question of the association between the *sutta* and *paccekabuddhas*, which appears to be a lacuna within scholarship.

3.2 Living alone – ekacariyā

Whereas *ekacariyā* is most commonly used in the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*, it does appear elsewhere, albeit very rarely. In a passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, *ekacariyā* is used literally, permitting a further conceptualisation of ‘wrong solitude’. Here, any *bhikkhu* who lives alone (*ekako*) in order to profit from local people is described as one who is ill-intentioned and ‘lives alone’ (*ekacarī*).¹³ In this context, the verb *carati* could also be

¹⁰ G. A. Somaratne, ‘The Horn of Rhinoceros: A Text that Speaks Unorthodoxy’, *Journal of Nāṇasamvara Centre for Buddhist Studies*, I (2018): 235-62, (p. 238).

¹¹ Clarke, *Family Matters in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms*, p. 7.

¹² Clarke, *Family Matters in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms*, p. 10. Unlike extant *vinaya* sources that reveal for example a different picture of renunciation including *bhikkhūnis* who became pregnant and were allowed to remain in the *Saṅgha* and that ‘family-friendly’ monasticism is just one other form of Buddhist ‘monasticisms’ that were accepted.

¹³ A III 130, 19-20. Apart from this and the S passage, the term *ekacariyā* does not occur elsewhere in the four primary *Nikāyas*.

translated in the more stative sense as ‘to practice’ to emphasise ‘behaviour’ with regards to renunciate life. In a verse in the *Dhammapada*, the mind that is to be reined in (*saṃyamati*) and restrained is like a mysterious invisible animal that wanders *ekacaram*.¹⁴ A similar figurative application of the term is also found in a verse from the *Theragāthā*:

Formless one, far-traveller, a wanderer alone (*ekacāri*), no more shall
I your bidding do, for sense desires are ill, leading to bitter fruit, to
brooding fear: with mind Nibbāna-turned I shall walk on.¹⁵

The commentator of the *Theragāthā* explains that the mind ‘wanders alone’ because it arises in one moment and ceases in the next.¹⁶ As a poetic expression then, *ekacariyā* here simply describes the movement of the mind.

In the following passage from the *Udāna*, *ekacariyā* appears again, to be applied mainly metaphorically:

Not living by way of craft, light, one desiring (others’) welfare, with
faculties restrained, completely released in every respect, wandering
resortless, one with none of ‘mine’, one without lodging — he, as one
wandering alone (*ekacara*) after having renounced conceit, is the monk.¹⁷

In the accompanying story to the passage, we can note a play on meanings based on the context of monks who associate with society at large by congregating to discuss which

¹⁴ Dh 37:

*dūraṅgamaṃ ekacaram asarāram guhāsayaṃ
ye cittaṃ saññamessanti mokkhanti mārabandhanā.*

¹⁵ Th 1122:

*arūpa dūraṅgama ekacāri na te karissaṃ vacanaṃ idāni 'haṃ,
dukkhā hi kāmā kaṭukā mahabbhayā, nibbānam evābhimano carissaṃ.*

Translation by Bhikkhu Khantipālo, *Forest Meditations*, pp.8-9.

¹⁶ ‘[The mind] is *ekacāri* since it occurs on account of its behaviour having become simply one. There is not even so much as two or even three thoughts that are able to arise together; but only one thought arises in a single continuity. When it ceases, furthermore, only one (thought) arises. Therefore, it is *ekacāri*.’ My translation of Th-a III 156, 23-7: *eko yeva hutvā caraṇavasena pavattanato ekacāri. antamaso dve tīṇi pi cittāni ekato uppajjituṃ samatthāni nāma n’atthi, ekam eva pana cittaṃ ekasmiṃ santāne uppajjati. tasmīṃ niruddhe aparam pi ekam eva uppajjati. tasmā ekacāri.*

¹⁷ Ud 114 (Ne): Translation by Masefield, *The Udāna*, p. 54 of Ud 32 (Ee):

*asippajīvī lahu atthakāmo
yatindriyo sabbadhivippamutto.
anokasārī amamo nirāso
hitvā mānaṃ ekacaro sa bhikkhū ti.*

kind of ‘craft’ (*sippa*) is greatest. The verse is used as a rebuke to *bhikkhus* who prefer such foolish talk to either religious discussion or ‘noble silence’.¹⁸ And, to those who think that any ‘craft’ could be of more appeal in renunciate life than being ‘without craft’—without mental defilement, specifically craving. The commentary makes the literal dimension of *ekacariyā* more explicit:

He, as one wandering alone (*ekacara*) amidst all (four) bodily postures as a result of his desire for seclusion and his being without craving as companion, without practising, unlike the other monks, socialising in groups...is known as the “monk” in the highest sense on account of his defilements having been completely broken up.¹⁹

The passage brings to mind the dangers of close association between monastics in religious communities addressed in Chapter 1 and how a *bhikkhu* is hence, compelled to continually practice seclusion from the group, to live simply and without desire.

Elsewhere, in a series of verses in the *Tissa Metteyya-sutta* of the *Suttanipāta*,²⁰ *ekacariyā* is used to stress the importance of celibacy in renunciate life:

He was known as a wise man
when resolved on living alone (*ekacariyam*)
but when he engaged in sexual intercourse,
like a dullard he is afflicted.²¹

The *sutta* goes on to describe how one who lives resolutely ‘alone’ is a *muni* (Sn 821). Physical seclusion is only intimated in a separate verse, not as *ekacariyā*, but as *viveka* (Sn 822). Although the force of *ekacariyā* in its figurative sense pertains to celibate life, it plays on other themes mentioned in the previous chapter. Pertaining to the ‘wise’, *ekacariyā* includes mental development attained through religious effort. A renunciate who formerly lived ‘alone’ (*eko pubbe caritvāna*) in this way and backslides to non-celibate life is like a ‘cart gone astray’ (Sn 816). Losing one’s way along the path evokes the commentarial stress on the Buddhist path as not forked but unified and straight

¹⁸ Ud 32.

¹⁹ Ud-a 206, 26-29. Translation by Masefield: *ime bhikkhū viya gaṇasaṅgaṇikaṃ akatvā paviveka-kāmatāya taṅhā-sahāya-virahena ca sabbiriyāpathesu ekacaro, so sabbaso bhinnakilesattā paramatthato bhikkhu nāma.*

²⁰ Sn 814-23.

²¹ Sn 820:

*paṇḍito ti samaññāto ekacariyam adhiṭṭhito,
athāpi methune yutto mando va parikissati.*

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 298.

(*ekāyana magga*).²² The verse reminds us how the single concept of *eka* encapsulates multiple skilful factors related to renunciate life in general as traced in Chapter 2.

The commentary to the *Tissa Metteyya-sutta* in the *Mahāniddeśa*²³ offers two distinctions to ‘one who formerly lived alone’ *eko pubbe caritvāna*.²⁴ Firstly, one is alone having ‘gone forth’ (*pabbajjā*) into homelessness by cutting of all ‘obstructions’ (*palibodhā*) to renunciate life: family, possessions, etc. He shaves his hair and beard and enters a state of ‘ownerless-ness’ (*ākiñcanabhāva*).²⁵ Gone forth this way, ‘living alone’ takes a second meaning as ‘giving up the group’ (*gaṇāvavassagga*). The *Mahāniddeśa* then evokes what I earlier identified as the *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula for physical seclusion; identifying remote places in the forest and woods that are separated from people and sounds and suitable for seclusion (*paṭisallāna*).²⁶ From being separated from the group, one is ‘alone’ (*eka*) regardless of posture, when one enters and returns from alms gathering or sits in private (*rahas*).²⁷ Sitting ‘alone’ in private clearly stresses the absence of other people, but in keeping with the verse’s emphasis on celibacy, *eka* speaks of other psychological and behavioural factors related to the absence of desire. As such, *eka* suggests a level of spiritual development, including ‘mental’ purity that must at least pertain to overcoming the hindrances. Finally, both classifications of *eka*, namely renunciation and physical seclusion, are characterised in the *Mahāniddeśa* with the refrain ‘he lives, dwells, behaves, fares, maintains himself and keeps going alone’.²⁸ We might, therefore, understand *ekacariyā* as ‘living alone’ aimed at bringing all skilful

²² The Pāli commentaries give five different interpretations of *ekāyana*: 1. as a single i.e. not forked path, 2. a path travelled alone, 3. the ‘singular’ or best path, 4. the path found in ‘one place’ i.e. the Buddha’s *dhmma-vinaya* and 5. the path that goes only to one place, namely *nibbāna*. For a summary and discussion of *ekāyana*, see Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, pp. 59-64.

²³ Nidd I 144-45.

²⁴ Commenting on verse Sn 816.

²⁵ Nidd I 144, 27-32: *sabbaṃ gharāvāsapalibodhaṃ chinditvā, puttadārapalibodhaṃ chinditvā, ñātipalibodhaṃ chinditvā, mittāmaccapalibodhaṃ chinditvā, sannidhipalibodhaṃ chinditvā, kesamassuṃ ohāretvā, kāsāyānivatthāni acchādetvā, agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajitvā, ākiñcanabhāvaṃ upagantvā.*

²⁶ Nidd I 145, 4-6: *so evaṃ pabbajito samāno eko araññavanapatthāni pantāni senāsanāni paṭisevati appasaddāni appanigghosāni vijanavātāni manussarāhaseyyakāni paṭisallānasārūpāni.*

²⁷ Nidd I 145, 7-9: *so eko gacchati, eko tiṭṭhati, eko nisīdati; eko seyyaṃ kappeti, eko gāmaṃ piṇḍāya pavasati, eko paṭikkamati, eko raho nisīdati, eko caṅkamaṃ adhiṭṭhāti.*

²⁸ My translation of Nidd I 145, 1-2 and Nidd I 145, 9-11: *eko carati viharati iriyati vattati pāleti yapeti yāpeti;*

factors to completion. A *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* is ‘alone’ because, having gone forth, he/she owns no thing and favours seclusion. Both are intimately linked to keep him/her practising on a ‘one way’ path towards the goal.

The play between the literal and figurative is also present in a verse from the *Samyutta Nikāya* in which *ekacariyā* is used to compare the Buddha who lives without any longing for sense pleasures to a lion or elephant.²⁹ What is of particular note here is how *ekacariyā* captures a sense of ‘right solitude’ as both physical and mental seclusion, where physical seclusion is inferred through solitary habits of particular animals.³⁰ There is a clear allusion to the refrain of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* in which *ekacariyā* is compared to a rhinoceros (or its horn). Scholars have suggested, or assumed, that the emphasis of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* is literal seclusion. However, this need not be the only way to interpret the *sutta* if, as alluded to, *ekacariyā* is associated with various contexts: the momentary movement of the mind, celibacy, renunciation, a single or narrow path as well as physical and mental seclusion. Before I look at the *sutta* in more detail, I will now turn to discuss the reasons why the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* has been associated with physical seclusion and explore how the *sutta* is canonically linked with the *paccekabuddha*. I will discuss how some recent scholarship is silent on or dismissive of this association. I will then explore how, despite the ambiguity with regards to whether the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* refers to the rhinoceros or its horn, recent scholarship has favoured the animal.³¹

3.3 Ekacariyā and the solitary ideal

The Pāli *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* (KVS) is located in the *Uragavagga* of the *Suttanipāta*, which forms part of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*. The *sutta* appears as a poem containing forty-one verses of which all but one contains the refrain: *eko care khagga-visāṇa kappo* (‘one should practise singly/alone like a rhinoceros’ horn’). Scholars have suggested that the antiquity of the verses is attested by the existence of a canonical commentary in the

²⁹ S I 16, 7: *sīhaṃ v-ekacaraṃ nāgam || kāmesu anapekkhinaṃ*.

³⁰ Whilst the elephant is, as we encounter elsewhere in this study, a motif of solitary striving, the lion is too but less celebrated as such. The lion, or rather its roar, is more prominent as a metaphor for a teaching of *Dhamma* from the Buddha. See *Cūlasīhanāda-sutta* (M I 64-68) and *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* (M I 68-83).

³¹ Apart from Bhikkhu Bodhi whose translation of the refrain as *eko care khaggavisāṇa-kappo* in the *sutta* is ‘one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn’, *Suttanipāta*, pp. 162-67.

Cūlaniddesa and a version appearing in Sanskrit in the *Mahāvastu-avadāna*.³² Although the *sutta* does not identify its orator, the *Cūlaniddesa* states that each verse is spoken by a *paccekabuddha*.³³ The *Cūlaniddesa* thus presents the earliest canonical link between the *paccekabuddha* and the *KVS*.³⁴

There is no doubt that secluded meditation, as espoused elsewhere in the Pāli Canon through repeated calls for *kāyaviveka*, is a major theme of the *KVS* verses. *Kāyaviveka* is made explicit in one verse that refers to ‘remote lodgings’ (*pantā senāsanāni*) — a feature of the *Udumbarikasīhanāda* formula for *kāyaviveka* which I identified as an instruction most frequently associated with forest practice:

Like the lion, king of beasts,
who has fangs as its strength,
who lives by attacking and overpowering,
one should resort to remote lodgings;
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.³⁵

Borrowing another familiar trope for seclusion that we have met earlier, a separate verse in the *KVS* exhorts the renouncer to resort to the forest just like an elephant.³⁶ The *Cūlaniddesa* is clear that this fits with a *paccekabuddha*’s ostensible reputation for solitude as one who abandons the group and practises *kāyaviveka*, evoking the

³² Norman, *Pāli Literature*, p. 65. The verses also appear in the *Apadāna* of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* and a version also appears in the Gāndhārī dialect. See Richard Salomon, *A Gāndhārī Version of the Rhinoceros Sūtra* (Seattle: University of Washington, 2000).

³³ The *Niddesa* finishes its commentary to each of the *Khagga-visāṇa-sutta*’s forty-one verses with the phrase: *tenāha so paccekasambuddho...*

³⁴ As well as this early Pāli canonical reference, a reference to *paccekabuddhas* also appears in later Pāli commentaries and the Sanskrit *Khagga-visāṇa-gāthā* in the *Mahāvastu-avadāna*. Salomon, *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, p. 8.

³⁵ Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p.166, Sn 72:

*sīho yathā dāṭhabalī pasayha
rājā migānaṃ abhibhuyyacārī
sevetha pantāni senāsanāni,
eko care khagga-visāṇa kappo.*

³⁶ Sn 53:

*nāgo va yūthāni vivajjayitvā
sañjātakhandho padumī ulāro
yathābhirantaṃ vihare araṇṇe,
eko care . . .*

Udumbarikasīhanāda formula.³⁷ I should add that much of the imagery used by the *Cūlaniddesa* here is repeated elsewhere in the *nikāyas* to illustrate the Buddha's seclusion as well as to enjoin the importance of *kāyaviveka* to all *bhikkhus/bhikkhunīs* to practice *kāyaviveka*.³⁸ The *Cūlaniddesa* explains elsewhere how physical seclusion in particular fits with the image of the rhinoceros's single horn:

As the horn of the rhinoceros is one (*ekaṃ*), without a second (*adutiya*), just so the *paccekabuddha* is like that, similar to that, a counterpart of that [...] He lives (*carati*) rightly in the world alone (*eko*), without a companion (*adutiya*), freed from bondage, and thus dwells, carries on, behaves, looks after himself, maintains himself, conducts himself.³⁹

In sum, three things are worth stressing. First, the Pāli Canon makes a relatively early association between the *KVS* and *paccekabuddhas*. Secondly, the *Cūlaniddesa* links physical seclusion in particular with the concept of *ekacariyā* in the refrain of the *KVS*. Thirdly, the *paccekabuddha* is strongly associated with physical seclusion in keeping with the refrain.⁴⁰ Even though *paccekabuddhas* are never mentioned in the *sutta* itself, their ostensible reputation for solitude fits with the underlying themes of some of other verses in the poem. Perceiving the risks in attachment to others, whether through association (*samsagga*, Sn 36) or through intimacy (*santhava*, Sn 37), one is exhorted to 'live alone'. Notably in the above *Cūlaniddesa* passage, *eka* is glossed by *adutiya* — 'living without partner' which has both a literal (being without a companion) and

³⁷ Nidd II 242: *nāgo va yūthāni vivajjayitvā ti yathā so hatthināgo yūthāni vivajjetvā parivajjetvā abhinivajjetvā eko va araṇṇavanamajjho gāhetvā carati viharati iriyati vatteti pāleti yapeti yāpeti, paccekasambuddho pi gaṇaṃ vivajjetvā parivajjetvā abhivajjetvā eko araṇṇavanapatthāni pantāni senāsanāni paṭisevati appasaddāni appanigghosāni vijanavātāni manussarāhasseyyakāni.*

³⁸ I refer to Ud 41-42 in the case of the Buddha being compared to the *nāga* (see Chapter 5) and A IV 435-38 where a *nāga* is able to gain relief from the pressures of his herd in the forest just as a *bhikkhu* is able to gain relief from the crowd by doing the same.

³⁹ Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p.423, Nidd II 213 (Ne): *yathā khaggassa nāma visāṇaṃ ekaṃ hoti adutiyaṃ, evaṃ'eva so paccekasambuddho takkappo tassadiso tappaṭibhāgo [...] eko adutiyo muttabandhano sammā loke carati viharati iriyati vatteti pāleti yapeti yāpeti ti.*

⁴⁰ In the *Apadāna*, a collection of autobiographical poems about *buddhas* and saints, we find the *Khaggavisāṇa -sutta* repeated but here preceded by verses about *paccekabuddhas* (Ap II 1-7) thus strengthening the canonical association albeit according to a later stratum. For a translation, see Ria Kloppenborg, *The paccekabuddha: A Buddhist Ascetic. A Study of the Concept of the Paccekabuddha in Pāli Canonical and Commentarial Literature*. Vol. 20 (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1974), pp. 13-15.

figurative expression (as a mind free of craving). Although seclusion is articulated here in terms of physical seclusion, we are reminded that it entails *kāyaviveka* and *cittaviveka* in continuum towards seclusion from all attachments.

However, in other verses, the context to ‘living alone’ shifts from physical seclusion to more abstract themes. In the following verse, the concept of *ekacariyā* is compared specifically to the renunciation of kings — the highest of all worldly responsibility, gratification and wealth:

But if one does not find a judicious companion,
a fellow wanderer, of good behavior, resolute,
like a king who has abandoned a conquered realm,
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.⁴¹

The verse stands apart from others in the *sutta* because of the double simile — living like the single horn of the rhinoceros and a renouncing king. That the *KVS* makes a reference to kings is significant since, as I will discuss presently, it appears to have inspired the association between *paccekabuddhas* and renouncing kings found throughout a later commentary in the *Paramatthajotikā* II.⁴² The verse is significant as it also appears to underscore the importance of living alone without companions as part of renunciate life under the right conditions. As such, *ekacariyā* takes a broader meaning in terms of striving independently without teachers and connects with the notion of a ‘narrow path’ where self-reliance (*aparapaccaya*), rather than specifically physical seclusion is meant. We can, from this, trace a play on *ekacariyā* in the *KVS* that is suggestive of further abstract meanings. Whilst this verse provides a taste of a wider theme, literature on the *sutta* has tended to overlook this in favour of physical seclusion.

Scholarly literature tying the *KVS* with a particular solitary ascetic ideal is quite extensive. For Sukumar Dutt, the verses are examples of how the settled community life is not envisaged in the purview of the *KVS* but instead is reflective of the solitary ideal.⁴³

⁴¹ Sn 46:

*no ce labhetha nipakaṃ sahāyaṃ
saddhiṃcaram sādhurihāri dhīraṃ,
rājā va raṭṭhaṃ vijitaṃ pahāya
eko care khagga-visāṇa kappo.*

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 163,

⁴² The *Paramatthajotikā*, as we will see, also attributes stories of *paccekabuddhas* to each verse of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*.

⁴³ Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 92

Similarly, B. G. Gokhale describes the ‘utter loneliness’ expressed in the *sutta* as espousing the spirit of ‘original Buddhism’.⁴⁴ The implication is that in this period, there was no cohesive community of Buddhist monks. The association with complete separation from society and the *Saṅgha* at large has permitted some scholars to easily assume the association with the *paccekabuddha*. In making this connection, Mohan Wijayaratna disassociates the poem from the Buddha and his followers.⁴⁵ Wijayaratna observes that the *KVS* stands apart from other *suttas* concluding that it ‘advocates the solitary life in an exaggerated way’.⁴⁶

Some scholars have been circumspect about the association between the *KVS* and the *paccekabuddha* or have sidestepped the question. Ria Kloppenborg suggested that the *paccekabuddha* may not have been understood as a concept at the time the verses were composed.⁴⁷ Richard Salomon suggests that the verses express a motivation of ‘forest-dwelling monks’⁴⁸. For Bhikkhu Bodhi, the spirit of the *KVS* lies in the attitude of a certain ‘individualistic’ meditative monks, who eschewed the group for solitary practice and independence. Bhikkhu Bodhi cites the example of the *arahat* Mahākassapa as a model of this approach.⁴⁹ Likewise, G. A. Somaratne rejects the idea that the *KVS* has any genuine association with *paccekabuddhas*.⁵⁰ Somaratne interprets the stanzas as verses of encouragement to young unmarried youth to renounce the home and to young renunciators, to adopt an unorthodox forest-dwelling life.⁵¹ Only Appleton’s aforementioned recent series of studies into *paccekabuddhas* in Pāli literature has offered any real clues as to what might lie behind the canonical link with the *KVS* verses. Appleton has highlighted how, in particular, that ‘lone’ or ‘solitary’ *buddha* may be too

⁴⁴ B. G. Gokhale, ‘The Theravāda-Buddhist View of History’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 85 no. 3 (1965), 354-360, p. 354.

⁴⁵ ‘The attitude of solitary buddhas towards society, therefore, differed from that of the Buddha and his disciples; they did not attempt to preach the Doctrine or to find disciples, since their knowledge of the Doctrine was not communicable to others... The attitude of the *Khaggavisāna-sutta* agrees perfectly with this way of life.’ Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, p. 111.

⁴⁶ Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, p. 110.

⁴⁷ Ria Kloppenborg, *The paccekabuddha*, p. 11.

⁴⁸ Salomon, *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, p. 15.

⁴⁹ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 102.

⁵⁰ Somaratne, *The Horn of Rhinoceros*, p. 235

⁵¹ Somaratne’s argument appears to be based on one verse that speaks of ‘sport and enjoyment’ amongst companions (p. 244) and a separate *sutta* of the Buddha’s own renunciation as a young man (p. 239).

narrow a translation for *paccekabuddha*. Firstly, their narratives tell us that many of these figures are often not seen as solitary⁵² and secondly, many are associated with awakening through signs or causes.⁵³ If the lives of *paccekabuddhas* are not consistently defined by solitude, how should we interpret the *KVS* verses with which they are associated? Appleton offers some help in identifying this association by highlighting how, according to many narratives, it is often kings that renounce and awaken as *paccekabuddhas*.⁵⁴ This presents an opportunity to explore the motif further and, together with a fresh perspective of the *KVS* verses, to offer an interpretation as to why they are associated with the *paccekabuddha*.

3.4 Like the rhinoceros and its single horn

As Salomon points out,⁵⁵ scholars are divided over whether the compound *khaggavisāṇa*, that appears in the title and refrain of the *sutta*, should be understood as ‘rhinoceros’⁵⁶ or ‘rhinoceros’s horn.’⁵⁷ K. R. Norman earlier argued for the latter whilst rejecting ‘rhinoceros’ using a parallel found in the Jain tradition and the authority of the *Cūlaniddesa* and Pāli commentaries⁵⁸ as his evidence. Salomon is more cautious, citing other scholars who favour the whole animal because of derivations of the Sanskrit *khadga* as ‘rhinoceros’ and those who suggest that solitary wandering makes more sense when referring to a mainly solitary animal rather than one of its features.⁵⁹ In his overall assessment, Salomon concludes that both translations are possible and suggests that the ambiguity may be deliberate as both the ‘rhinoceros’ and ‘rhinoceros’s horn’ are ‘implied simultaneously [...] as a meaningful simile’.⁶⁰

⁵² Appleton, *Jātaka Stories and Paccekabuddhas*, p. 290.

⁵³ Appleton, *Dialogues with Solitary Buddhas*, pp. 40-42.

⁵⁴ Appleton, *Shared Characters in Jain, Buddhist and Hindu Narrative*, p. 162. See also Appleton, *Jātaka Stories and Paccekabuddhas*, p. 284.

⁵⁵ Salomon, *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Based on rendering *khaggavisāṇa* as a *bahubbīhi* (exo-centric) compound: literally ‘(one) having a sword as a horn’.

⁵⁷ Taking *khaggavisāṇa* as a (dependent) *tappurisa* compound: literally ‘horn of a rhinoceros’.

⁵⁸ K.R. Norman, ‘Solitary as a rhinoceros horn’, *Buddhist Studies Review* 13, no. 2 (1996), 133–142 (pp. 137-139).

⁵⁹ Salomon *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, p. 11.

⁶⁰ Salomon, *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, p. 13.

Others who, unlike Norman, translate *khaggavisāṇa* as ‘rhinoceros’ include Robert Chalmers,⁶¹ N. A. Jayawickrama,⁶² Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu⁶³ and Naomi Appleton.⁶⁴ Jayawickrama argued based on comparative psychology to counter Norman (and the commentaries) citing that in other parts of the canon, wandering alone is compared with the movements of animals rather than parts of their anatomy.⁶⁵ This point is also taken up by Dhivan Thomas Jones who revisits the arguments made by Norman in a more recent study of the discussions to date.⁶⁶

Jones uses zoological evidence to argue that the adult Indian rhinoceros is mainly solitary.⁶⁷ He remarks that those who composed the *sutta* would not only have noticed the rhinoceros’s single horn but would also have observed its solitary nature and habitat.⁶⁸ Jones also highlights a potential problem with Norman’s translation of *eko care khaggavisāṇa-kappo* (basically, ‘one should wander solitary as a rhinoceros horn’⁶⁹) pointing out that *khaggavisāṇa-kappo* qualifies *eko* not *eko care*. As Jones explains, Norman’s translation ignores that *eko care* is a unitary concept in Buddhist literature regardless of its grammatical construction.⁷⁰ Jones concludes, unlike Norman, that the original intention of the composer is uncertain and, like Salomon, argues that both ‘rhinoceros’ and ‘rhinoceros’s horn’ are valid.⁷¹

What Jones’ comprehensive summary of the debate and critique of Norman’s mainly philological work allows is a less restricted interpretation of the *sutta*. On one hand, the rhinoceros’s behaviour is evocative of physical seclusion. On the other, its horn

⁶¹ Robert Chalmers, *Buddha's Teachings: Being the Sutta-Nipata or Discourse-Collection*. Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. 37 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933).

⁶² N. A. Jayawickrama, ‘A critical analysis of the Sutta Nipata’, *Pali Buddhist Review* 2, no. 1 (1977), 14-41.

⁶³ Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, *Sutta Nipāta: The Discourse Group* (Valley Center, CA: Metta Forest Monastery, 2016)

⁶⁴ Naomi Appleton, *Shared Characters in Jain, Buddhist and Hindu Narrative*, p. 143. Appleton switches to ‘rhinoceros horn’ in *Dialogues with Solitary Buddhas*, pp. 36-50. This appears to reflect the focus to the study of the *paccekabuddhas* more specifically in the latter study.

⁶⁵ Jayawickrama, *Sutta Nipata*, p. 22.

⁶⁶ Jones, *The Problem of Khaggavisāṇa*, p. 166.

⁶⁷ Jones, *The Problem of Khaggavisāṇa*, p. 167.

⁶⁸ Jones, *Khaggavisāṇa*, p. 168.

⁶⁹ Norman, *Solitary as a Rhinoceros Horn*, p. 137.

⁷⁰ For example, this concept occurs elsewhere as a compound *ekacariyā* or separately, *ekaṃ carantaṃ*. Jones, *The Problem of Khaggavisāṇa*, p. 171.

⁷¹ Jones, *The Problem of Khaggavisāṇa*, pp. 175-56.

allows more abstract notions of ‘singleness’ of ‘solitariness’ to be retained. Although Jones is flexible on the final translation, his analysis favours ‘rhinoceros’ as a corollary of his critique of Norman. One of Jones’ criticisms relates to Norman’s citation of a Jain parallel in Prākṛit which Norman argues ‘makes it clear that it is the horn that is solitary’.⁷² Jones points out that the context of the Prākṛit phrase *khaggi-visānaṃ* is a series of epithets where the Jina is compared to animals, rather than their parts.⁷³ However, Jones overlooks how, in a review of Robert Chalmers’ 1933 translation of the *Suttanipāta*,⁷⁴ W. Norman Brown showed that a later Jain Śvetāmbara text called the *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra*⁷⁵ describes Ajitanātha, the *Tīrthāṅkara*, as being not only ‘never settled like a rhinoceros’, namely the animal itself, but also ‘solitary as the horn of the rhinoceros’.⁷⁶ It seems to me that in the Jain tradition, the simile does extend to both the rhinoceros and its distinct feature. Moreover, ‘never settled’ and ‘solitary’ (or ‘single’) reveal different characteristics of the rhinoceros and its horn respectively, just as, for example, effort and physical seclusion pertain to different yet interdependent aspects of the path. If we accept this interdependence and that Buddhist and Jain sources are consonant on the imagery, it seems reasonable to assume that the ambiguity in the meaning of *khaggavisāna* argued by past scholars is deliberate, and, that the simile to be open to interpretation. Whilst the behaviour of the ‘rhinoceros’ permits an understanding of literal seclusion its single horn evokes a more extensive concept to emerge.

Despite the ambiguity, physical separation has tended to be reinforced as the main theme of the simile. Ria Kloppenborg, who advocated either ‘rhinoceros’ or ‘rhinoceros horn’ adopted the latter in her translations.⁷⁷ For Kloppenborg, they each support the image of a *paccekabuddha*’s solitary way of life, citing later commentarial passages that

⁷² Since the phrase *khaggavisānaṃ va ega-jāe* of the Jain sutra does not allow comparison with the rhinoceros. Norman, *Solitary as a rhinoceros horn*, p.139.

⁷³ Jones, *The Problem of Khaggavisāna*, p. 172.

⁷⁴ Brown, *Review of Buddha's Teachings, being the Sutta-Nipāta*, pp. 218-19.

⁷⁵ A twelfth-century text translated by Helen M. Johnson, *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra, or 'Lives of the Sixty-Three Illustrious Persons by Ācārya Śrī Hemachandra*, 6 vols (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1931-1962). The text includes a biography of Mahāvira in the *Mahāvīracaritra*. See *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra*, Vol VI (1962), p. 42.

⁷⁶ According to Johnson’s translation of the *Ajitanāthacarita* in, *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra*, Vol II (1937), p. 91.

⁷⁷ ‘In view of the fact that the rhino’s way of life can equally be called solitary, it seems that in the comparison both aspects are emphasized, the one horn as well as the solitary life, compared to the way of life of the *paccekabuddha*’. Kloppenborg, *The paccekabuddha*, p. 60.

picture the *paccekabuddha* either as a lonely⁷⁸ or distant figure, unwilling or incapable of teaching others.⁷⁹ Greg Bailey also favours ‘rhinoceros’ whilst interpreting the verses from the perspective of the *bhikkhu*.⁸⁰ Bailey uses the *KVS* to explore the ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ aspects of *nivṛtti* ideology in Buddhist texts.⁸¹ The mostly ‘negative’ aspects are exemplified in ‘anti-householder’ verses which enjoin the *bhikkhu* to move away from household and company, making solitude central to the escape from *samsāra*.⁸² Bailey takes a *bhikkhu*’s independence (*seritaṃ*) to express the *sutta*’s ‘positive’ aspects.⁸³ However, he does not restrict ‘positive’ verses to the fully realised individual. Comparison with animal behaviour serves to emphasise a *bhikkhu*’s determination and freedom to wander not just in terms of liberation but as virtues to overcome hindrances along the way.⁸⁴ Although Salomon’s decision to opt for ‘rhinoceros’ is taken ‘arbitrarily and not entirely without doubts’,⁸⁵ it is as we shall see, based on his recapitulation of the verses as an expression of mainly literal seclusion. Like Salomon, Jones favours ‘rhinoceros’ as the motif that is the ‘most elegant, as well as not incorrect’.⁸⁶ For Jones, the rhinoceros tends to favour what he calls the ‘relative solitude’ of Buddhist renunciates in general who, like the animal, are not perpetually reclusive. What this brief survey of literature seeks to show is the reticence on the part of some to accept ‘the rhinoceros’s horn’. Their preference for ‘rhinoceros’ appears consonant with an assumption that solitude is the underlying message of the *KVS*.

In what follows, I will first assess Salomon’s analysis of the verses of the *KVS* and offer my own interpretation of the underlying themes. Supported by Jones’

⁷⁸ ‘The stories of the lives of Paccekabuddhas, especially those found in the Sn.A. again and again stress the importance of solitariness for their attainment of *bodhi*. This need to retire from the world and from men is well known in the Indian religious tradition, but [...] the *paccekabodhisatta* strives for insight in isolation.’ Kloppenborg, *The paccekabuddha*, p. 59.

⁷⁹ ‘A *paccekabuddha* is not able to overcome the anxiety that the teaching will be too difficult for others to be made understood by others, is not capable of setting aside the disadvantage of having to find disciples [...] and to establish contacts with other people.’ Kloppenborg, *The paccekabuddha*, p. 77.

⁸⁰ Greg Bailey, *Materials for the Study of Ancient Indian Ideologies; Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti* (Torino: Pubblicazioni di Indologica Taurinensia No. 19, 1985), pp. 88-94.

⁸¹ *nivṛtti* (‘turning away from the worldly activity’) is opposed to *pravṛtti* (‘activity that maintains worldly life’).

⁸² Bailey, *Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti*, p. 89.

⁸³ Bailey, *Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti*, p. 92.

⁸⁴ Bailey, *Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti*, p. 93.

⁸⁵ Salomon, *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, p. 12.

⁸⁶ Jones, *Khaggavisāṇa*, pp. 175-56.

conclusion that *khaggavisāṇa* is an ambiguous term, I will attempt to show how the verses of the *KVS* reflect several themes that express multiple dimensions to the notion of *ekacariyā*. However, unlike Jones, I suggest that there are positive reasons to accept the strange feature of the rhinoceros's horn as the primary translation of *khaggavisāṇa*.

3.5 The Khaggavisāṇa-sutta revisited

For Salomon, the overall message of the *sutta* is that one should 'choose companions carefully' but since wholesome companions are rare, 'it is better to have none at all'.⁸⁷ Salomon's summary supports literal separation as the abiding theme: '[...] the entire complex of images is consistent with the overarching theme of separation and solitude and of the solitary life in the forest.'⁸⁸ According to Salomon, there are three classes of verses to the overall *sutta*,⁸⁹ with 'solitary spiritual life' represented by twenty-seven of the verses and therefore, the most numerous class.⁹⁰ One of the two example verses that he cites to fit his 'solitude' class is Sn 42:⁹¹

At home in the four directions, unrepelled,
contented with anything whatsoever,
enduring obstacles, fearless,
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.⁹²

The verse does evoke physical separation of an ideal renunciate who wanders unhindered in any direction. The verse more likely plays on the literal notion of wandering with renunciate virtues of simplicity, contentment and effort. Moreover, 'At home in the four directions' is taken by the *Cūlaniddesa* to mean radiating the four directions with each

⁸⁷ Salomon, *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, p. 7.

⁸⁸ Salomon, *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, p. 8.

⁸⁹ 1. 'the dangers of attachment', 2. 'solitary spiritual life' and 3. 'the nature of friendship and spiritual life'. Salomon, *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁰ He does not identify all the verses that constitute his three classes but gives examples of each one.

⁹¹ Salomon references verses by their number order in the *sutta* itself rather than citing them in order of appearance in the *Suttanipāta* collection of verses. Sn 42 = verse number 8 in the Pāli version. *Gāndhārī Rhinoceros Sūtra*, p. 8.

⁹² Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 162, Sn 42:

*cātuddiso appatigho ca hoti
santussamāno itarītarena,
parissayānaṃ sahitā achambhī
eko care...*

of the four *brahmavihāras*.⁹³ In the refrain, the term *eka* is synonymous with both homeless wandering and inner meditative life. That is, although the poetic effect used here is unique to this verse, the concept of ‘singleness’ associated with *eko care* is not necessarily constrained to ‘literal separation’ as Salomon suggests.

There is no doubt that *kāyaviveka* forms part of the purview of the refrain, ‘one should live alone like a rhinoceros’s horn’ repeated in the *KVS*. Yet the imagery of solitary life in the forest at roots of trees and in open spaces is alluded to in only two verses: one which exhorts a *bhikkhu* to endure all temperatures and forest insects (Sn 52) and another about *paṭisallāna* and *jhāna* (Sn 69). If *jhāna* is *cittaviveka*, we can assume that *paṭisallāna* must refer mainly to *kāyaviveka*. Physical seclusion is mostly articulated in terms of dissociation from people: wives or sons (e.g. Sn 35, 38, 60), unwholesome associates (e.g. Sn 57) or the crowd in general (Sn 40). Metaphorical references to physical seclusion include a deer in the forest (Sn 39) and an elephant living free from its herd (Sn 53).

Even though the refrain *eko care* is used in most verses, not all of the themes in the verses imply that it is physical seclusion a *bhikkhu* is being reminded of. In a theme that is related to physical seclusion, a group of verses speak of company as a peril to the religious goal (e.g. Sn 37, 41). Salomon may point out that these verses are better included in those related to ‘separation and solitude’, which he considers to be the predominate theme. However, these verses could equally inspire householders to renounce as well as enjoin *bhikkhus* to practice seclusion. Included in these verses is Sn 46 (see above) which compares one who cannot find a good companion and lives alone to a king who renounces his kingdom. Moreover, as Appleton has argued from studies of renouncing kings, there is some evidence in Buddhist literature for supporting the notion of renunciation after fulfilling a moral life as a householder as an alternative perspective.⁹⁴ These verses are therefore better designated to a separate theme on renouncer life in general coextensive with the theme of physical seclusion. One discards signs of lay life (Sn 44), leaves the home and family (Sn 60) and becomes an almsman (Sn 65). On this theme, I include verses about qualities and virtues that maintain renunciate life such as endeavour (e.g. Sn 68), aspiration (Sn 70) and compassion (Sn 73). A separate theme includes verses that clearly identify advanced or blissful states of

⁹³ Nidd II 225.

⁹⁴ Appleton, *Shared Characters in Jain, Buddhist and Hindu Narrative*, p. 140.

mind that includes a mind attained in knowledge (Sn 55) and cut off from all afflictions (Sn 66). A smaller theme speaks of recognising causes of suffering such as attachment to sense pleasures (e.g. Sn 51). Less numerous are verses that praise suitable companions such as noble teachers and ascetics (e.g. Sn 58). My analysis accounts for five separate themes that include and expand upon Salomon's three classifications:⁹⁵

Renunciation

10 (44), 25 (59), 26 (60), 29 (63), 30 (64), 31 (65), 33 (67), 34 (68), 36 (70), 39 (73).

Physical solitude (living without companions, seclusion)

1 (35), 4 (38), 5 (39), 6 (40), 8 (42), 18 (52), 19 (53), 23 (57), 35 (69), 38 (72).

Community life/companionship as negative

3 (37), 7 (41), 9 (43), 12 (46), 14 (48), 15 (49), 20 (54), 41 (75).

The fully liberated state

21 (55), 22 (56), 28 (62), 32 (66), 37 (71), 40 (74).

Causes of suffering

2 (36), 16 (50), 17 (51), 27 (61).

Community life/companionship as positive

11 (45), 13 (47), 24 (58).

What appears, *prima facie*, to be predominately about a literal form of solitude ('companionless-ness') is something more comprehensive. The verses reveal several layers of meanings of *eka* as 'single' rather than 'alone' and the *sutta* can accommodate other perspectives. *Ekacariyā* embraces renunciate life in general as well as separation from others. What emerges is a picture of solitude in a more abstract sense of 'singleness' that inspires one to live un-attached from the pain normally associated with conventional society. The principle of 'singleness' includes physical seclusion as part of the continuum of efforts to unburden oneself from that which impedes religious goals so that the mind can become concentrated. In this sense, *ekacariyā* as 'practising singly' is as much about abstract notions of renunciation as it is about *kāyaviveka*. The refrain, *eko care...* appears to express renunciate life as an individual endeavour orientated one way towards

⁹⁵ For comparison with Salomon, I first list the verse number in the *sutta* itself, followed by the *Suttanipāta* verse number in brackets.

recognising causes of suffering, developing wholesome spiritual faculties and abandoning unwholesome ones.

Full awakening is a singular accomplishment as suggested by an *arahat*'s independent state of existence:

“I have transcended the contortions of views,
reached the fixed course, obtained the path.
I have aroused knowledge, I'm not to be led by others”:
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.⁹⁶

Here again, *ekacariyā* is used in the context of a single or straight path characterised by preliminary stages of accomplishment as well as final awakening knowledge. It must be pointed out, however, that this theme is the exception. My interpretation of the verses shows how, as Bailey earlier suggested, that verses speak more of a *bhikkhu*'s career on the path.⁹⁷ Whilst ostensibly, the path appears a particularly intense one, I suggest that its general themes are more encompassing as ideals of renunciation and meditation.

As shown in the above classifications, the ‘singleness’ expressed by the *KVS* also allows for companionship, despite the references to physical seclusion. Yet community is kept simple and limited to like-minded and morally wholesome companions:

If one should find a judicious companion,
a fellow wanderer, of good behaviour, resolute,
having overcome all obstacles, one should
live with him, satisfied and mindful.⁹⁸

The above verse is, unsurprisingly, the only one without the refrain *eko care...* However, in another verse, the refrain *eko care...* is paradoxically also applicable for one who finds companionship with the wise:

⁹⁶ Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 164; Sn 55:

*diṭṭhīvisūkāni upātivatto
patto niyāmaṃ paṭiladdhamaggo,
uppannañāṇo ‘mhi anaññaneyyo
eko care...*

⁹⁷ However, see section 3.6 on how some verses might speak of how a *paccekabuddha* is elsewhere in the *Cūlaniddesa* considered ‘solitary’ (*eka*).

⁹⁸ Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 163; Sn 45:

*sace labhetha nipakaṃ sahāyaṃ
saddhiṃcaram sādhuvihāri dhīraṃ,
abhibhuyya sabbāni parissayāni
careyya ten' attamano satīmā.*

One should resort to the learned, a bearer of Dhamma,
an eminent friend gifted with ingenuity.
Having known the benefits and removed doubt,
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.⁹⁹

If we compare the premise of the two verses (wholesome companionship), the inclusion of the refrain, *eko care...* in the second makes little sense. Bailey has interpreted the second verse to suggest a strong bias for physical seclusion in that even if a *bhikkhu* finds a likeminded associate, he should ultimately reject his company and live alone.¹⁰⁰ Whilst Bailey has chosen to emphasise the literal meaning of *ekacariyā*, it is still possible to detect a more expansive meaning at play. The second verse accommodates the ideal of occasional companionship that the image of a mainly solitary rhinoceros brings.¹⁰¹ That is, living ‘singly’ can also accommodate community practice orientated toward the goal. Religious life involves relationships where ‘others’ are restricted to those who directly facilitate the single path and help one reach the goal. In other words, even though a *bhikkhu* may be guided and instructed by a teacher, he still needs to retire from the group in order to practise independently.

To sum up, previous scholars have for good reason, focussed on physical seclusion as the centrepiece of the *KVS*. This theme seems to support what is advocated throughout Pāli literature. Physical seclusion is part of continuum along with going forth from household life into ‘homelessness’, attaining states of *samādhi* and awakening knowledge of the four noble truths. The verses of the *sutta* appear to be as much about renunciate life in general as they are about solitude in its literal sense. It also includes other metaphorical meanings that I suggest are better accommodated by ‘singleness’. The refrain, ‘one should live (or practise) singly...’ allows for these layers to be incorporated as well as lone wandering or ‘companionless-ness’. If we accept that physical seclusion is, as Salomon and others argue, the main theme, we can begin to recognise why the *sutta* is associated with the *paccekabuddha* as an ostensibly ‘solitary’ or ‘lone’ figure. This

⁹⁹ Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 165; Sn 58:

bahussutaṃ dhammadharaṃ bhajetha
mittaṃ uḷāraṃ patibhānavantaṃ,
aññāya atthāni vineyya kaṃkhaṃ
eko care...

¹⁰⁰ ‘...this set of verses takes the isolation even further, the monk should even reject a companion on his spiritual quest, one who has the same outlook as himself.’ Bailey, *Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti*, p. 90.

¹⁰¹ This supports Jones’ conclusion; *The Problem of Khaggavisāṇa*, p. 176.

idea would also favour the image of the mainly solitary habits of the Indian rhinoceros and support ‘rhinoceros’ as the preferred referent of the refrain Yet, many scholars are doubtful that the association with the *paccekabuddha* is genuine. Any interpretation of the *sutta* that accepts multiple layers of meaning to *ekacariyā*, as I have suggested, may clearly add to this doubt. Nevertheless, the association between the *KVS* and the *paccekabuddha* exists in a relatively early stratum of the canon. As I will now discuss, further scrutiny of the commentary to the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* shows that the reputation of *paccekabuddhas* as exclusively ‘solitary’ in the literal sense is problematic.

3.6 Paccekabuddhas and the Paramatthajotikā

As we have already noted, scholars have generally doubted that the association between the *KVS* and the *paccekabuddha* is genuine. Among these, Somaratne’s recent study suggests that the earliest listeners of the *sutta* were inspired by the individualistic motivations associated with renunciation.¹⁰² Yet like others, he has ignored the rich narratives of the commentary to the *KVS*. A reading of these narratives, as I will explore presently, shows that not only are they all linked by renunciation, but renunciation of the highest form of wealth and status. So, if the de facto association of the *paccekabuddha* is with physical seclusion, to what extent is this borne out in the commentarial narratives?

The commentary to all forty-one verses of the *KVS* in the *Paramatthajotikā* II appears in the form of origin stories (*uppatti*) and word meanings (*atthavaṇṇanā*). Only five of the stories explicitly mention the forest as the place of *paccekabodhi*.¹⁰³ For example, the forest is the place of awakening for a king who becomes disheartened by mistrust of his entourage and renounces his kingdom¹⁰⁴ and for a king who renounces after he realises that a recurring boil cannot be cured by normal medical intervention.¹⁰⁵ In another story, *paccekabodhi* occurs after a renunciate king realises that he must remain in his forest hut rather than seeking out more amenable places to dwell.¹⁰⁶ Both solitude and self-reliance appear stressed in the story of a prince and a chaplain’s son who go

¹⁰² Somaratne’s argument appears to be based on one verse that speaks of ‘sport and enjoyment’ amongst companions (p. 244) and a separate *sutta* of the Buddha’s own renunciation as a young man (p. 239). Somaratne, *The Horn of Rhinoceros*.

¹⁰³ The four mentioned below and the story of Sn 54 at Pj II 105, see later.

¹⁰⁴ The commentary to Sn 43 at Pj II 89-90. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 449.

¹⁰⁵ The commentary to Sn 51 at Pj II 100-01. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 460.

¹⁰⁶ The commentary to Sn 52 at Pj II 101, 11-15. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 461.

forth together.¹⁰⁷ Initially practising separately, they become discontented and decide to stay together. But they soon realise that attainment depends on ‘delighting in unification’ (*ekībhāvābhirati*).¹⁰⁸ They each attain *paccekabodhi* only after one of them leaves for the forest and the other remains alone in his hut. The implication is that *jhāna* is best attained when one is both physically alone and mentally unattached. In other stories, awakening happens in solitary settings other than the forest such as in a quiet room at the top of the king’s palace.¹⁰⁹ However, these are the only stories in the *Paramatthajotikā* where literal separation is explicitly linked with *paccekabodhi*. Physical separation could be intimated elsewhere such as in the reference to a park¹¹⁰ and in several stories as a result of going forth. Still, in many of these stories, the emphasis appears to be on the causes of renunciation.

As other scholars have shown, the *paccekabuddha*’s association with solitary life is not a complete picture. Even if their traditional association is with relative silence,¹¹¹ *paccekabuddhas* do sometimes teach others.¹¹² Appleton has more recently suggested that *paccekabuddhas* teach through ‘words and signs.’¹¹³ She cites some stories from the *Paramatthajotikā* commentary as well as the *jātakas* that are examples of dialogical exchanges where *paccekabuddhas* give simple or abbreviated messages as ‘signs’ that initiate reflection, insight and awakening.¹¹⁴ Bhikkhu Anālayo earlier showed how the term *pacceka-brahmā* describes *brahmā* gods as separate or individual i.e. without a retinue.¹¹⁵ The idea of *pacceka* as ‘independent’ rather than ‘solitary’ is also supported by Appleton for whom the stories are evidence of a different focus to the nature of the

¹⁰⁷ The commentary to Sn 45-46 at Pj II 92-94. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 451-54.

¹⁰⁸ Pj II 93, 6.

¹⁰⁹ The commentary to Sn 37 at Pj II 72, 29-30. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 431.

¹¹⁰ The commentary to Sn 44 at Pj II 90-92. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, pp.450-52.

¹¹¹ That is, they do not enlighten others and are unable to conceptually apply and thus teach Dhamma. *paccekabuddhā sayam bujjhati na pare bodhenti [...] na hi te lokuttaradhammam paññattiṃ āropetvā desetum sakkonti*. Pj II 51, 21-24.

¹¹² As Kloppenborg earlier pointed out using the story of Sn 38 where a *paccekabuddha* uses a simile of a bamboo shoot as a meditation object. *The paccekabuddha*, p. 78.

¹¹³ Appleton, *Dialogues with Solitary Buddhas*, p. 40.

¹¹⁴ For example, Appleton uses the stories to Sn 42 and 72 to show how *paccekabuddhas* briefly teach about fearlessness (p. 39) and how in the story to Sn 47, their equanimity towards alms food gives a king a sign to renounce and awaken himself (p. 42).

¹¹⁵ Bhikkhu Anālayo, ‘Pacceka Buddhas in the *Isigili-sutta* and its *Ekottarika-āgama* Parallel’, *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 6 (2010), 5-36, p. 11. Anālayo further suggests that solitude is not the most distinctive feature of the *paccekabuddha*, (p. 15).

paccekabodhi. That is, supporting what Norman¹¹⁶ had earlier suggested, a *paccekabuddha* is an individual awakened through a cause.¹¹⁷ An example commonly cited is the *Paramatthajotikā* story of a king who awakens upon the sight of a maid grinding sandalwood.¹¹⁸ Noticing how the sound of two bracelets clashing together arises from one of her arms but how no sound arises from a single bracelet on the other arm, he grows disenchanted with company.¹¹⁹ Other stories more clearly combine a cause of awakening and a *paccekabodhisatta*'s self-reliance. For example, a righteous king awakens after he sees his own army avoid conflict with his enemy.¹²⁰ Having seen that no blood had been spilled, he attains the *jhāna* of loving-kindness. Developing this further, he explores the conditionality of phenomena and becomes self-accomplished (*sayambhutam*). In another, a king reflects on the nature of suffering after seeing a fire spread through a forest and later, after seeing a fish escape a fisherman's net, he renounces and develops the wisdom leading to *paccekabodhi*.¹²¹

From the above, we can conclude that *paccekabodhi* being predicated upon forest practice is not the norm in the commentary to the *KVS*. Similarly, not all stories involve *paccekabuddhas* teaching. Even though, as Appleton observes, *paccekabodhi* often arises from causes and a *paccekabuddha* teaches using signs, neither of these appear as motifs that consistently link these stories. So, if neither solitude nor causes/signs connect the stories together, what does? A clue to this appears in one of four stories involving kings who go on to awaken as *paccekabuddhas* through initially practising *jhāna*.¹²² In one of them, a king renounces after realising that '[k]ingship is an obstacle to the bliss of jhāna'.¹²³ Consequently, the key to better understanding the traditional association with *paccekabodhi* may not lie with its nature but rather with the *paccekabodhisatta*.

¹¹⁶ K. R. Norman, 'The Pratyeka-Buddha in Buddhism and Jainism', in *Buddhist Studies: Ancient and Modern*, ed. by Phillip Denwood and Alexander Piatigorsky, (London and Dublin: Curzon, 1983b), pp. 92-106 (p. 96-97).

¹¹⁷ Appleton, *Dialogues with Solitary Buddhas*, p. 43.

¹¹⁸ The commentary to Sn 48 at Pj II 95-96. See Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, pp. 455-56.

¹¹⁹ The simile of the bracelets also found in the *Janaka-jātaka* which has clear links with *paccekabuddhas*. It also appears in non-Buddhist texts. See Appleton, *Shared Characters in Jain, Buddhist and Hindu Narrative*, p. 146.

¹²⁰ The commentary to Sn 35 at Pj II 52-67. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, pp. 407-24.

¹²¹ The commentary to Sn 62 at Pj II 114-15. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, pp. 477-78.

¹²² The stories to Sn 66 at Pj II 118-19, Sn 67 at Pj II 119-20, Sn 69 at Pj II 122-23 and Sn 73 at Pj II 127-28.

¹²³ Pj II 127, ³⁰ (Be); *jhānasukhantarāyakaram rajjan ti*. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 493.

The strongest motif of the stories of *paccekabuddhas* in the commentary to the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* is that of former kings. All but one of the stories involves a royal renouncer. In one case, *paccekabodhi* is attained following a realisation about royal life: ‘What good is kingship when an ascetic’s duty is better?’¹²⁴ After a king renounces, the following is typically stated by the commentator: ‘Then, having abandoned his large kingdom, he went forth, undertook insight, and became a *paccekabuddha*.’¹²⁵ In several cases, the awakened king corrects his former subjects about his status: ‘I’m not a king, men. I’m a *paccekabuddha*’.¹²⁶ As shown above, awakening is sometimes predicated upon external prompts. Appleton has suggested that it may be useful to treat these examples as ‘similes’ that teach the need to renounce kingdoms.¹²⁷ Yet in many cases what is narrated is the social reality of kingship that makes kings abandon their lands and wealth for the hardship of ascetic life. Kings renounce because of corruption or the lack of wisdom amongst advisors.¹²⁸ Elsewhere, it is the oppression of the crowd,¹²⁹ the constant threat of conflict and loss or the need to acquire more wealth.¹³⁰ Mental corruptions are often narrated in terms of fear¹³¹ or greed.¹³² Sometimes, a king recognises the suffering that he creates for himself¹³³ or for others: ‘While exercising kingship, I create suffering for many.’¹³⁴ Although discontent is common amongst kings, what can also lead to renunciation is a taste of non-worldly happiness. As mentioned earlier, some

¹²⁴ Pj II 73, 1-2 (Be); *so kiṃ me rajjena, samaṇadhammo varo ti*. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 431.

¹²⁵ Pj II 95, 1-2. *mahārajaṃ pahāya pabbajjaṃ samādāya vipassanaṃ ārabhitvā paccekabuddho hutvā*. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p.454. Similarly, at Pj II. 106, 10-11, II 107, 25-26, II 109, 11-12, II 110, 25-26, II 111, 29-30, II 112, 21-22, II 113, 24-25, II 115, 6-7, II 115, 28-29, II 117, 15-16, II 118, 2-3, II, 118, 16-17, II 119, 15-16, II 124, 6-7, II 128, 1-2 and II 130, 12-13.

¹²⁶ Pj II 63, 8-9; *nāhaṃ bhāṇe rājā, paccekabuddho nāmāhan ti*. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 419. Similarly, at Pj II 88, 6-7, II 91, 16, II 96, 7 and II 102, 29,

¹²⁷ Appleton takes the simile of the bracelets that also appears in the *Mahājanaka-jātaka* (J VI 30-68) as one of a series of motifs connected with renouncing kings of Videha that connect Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions. Naomi Appleton, *Shared Characters in Jain, Buddhist and Hindu Narrative*, p. 147.

¹²⁸ E.g. in the commentary to Sn 37 at Pj II 72,23 and Sn 57 at Pj II 109, 3-6.

¹²⁹ E.g. in the commentary to Sn 39 at Pj II 80, 21-23.

¹³⁰ E.g. in the commentary to Sn 68 at Pj II 121-22.

¹³¹ E.g. in the commentary to Sn 42 at Pj II 86-87.

¹³² E.g. in the commentary to Sn 65 at Pj II 117-18.

¹³³ E.g. in the commentary to Sn 59 at Pj II 111, 24-27.

¹³⁴ Pj II 112, 19-20 (Be); *ahaṃ rajjaṃ karonto bahunnaṃ dukkhaṃ karomi*. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 475 in commentary to Sn 60.

kings are described as already adept at *jhāna* meditation and then renounce in order to protect and nurture the happiness that arises with it. However, more than any other single theme, the stories appear to narrate the causes of suffering for kings, either due to their own character or those they are connected to.

Only one story is not attributed to a king but a layperson who is the son of a financier. Formerly living a pampered life, the son decides to renounce despite his parents' objections. However, he becomes unhappy with harsh renunciate life and returns home only to renounce again. Only after renouncing the third time does he realise *paccekabodhi*.¹³⁵ This story has certain similarities to another in the same commentary about a prince whose parents agree to him renouncing only if he lives in the royal park.¹³⁶ He remains mollycoddled and protected even as a renunciate until a *paccekabuddha* shows him a vision of the way of life of real renunciates. Consequently, the *paccekabodhisatta* sneaks past his royal guard one night and enters the forest where he attains *paccekabodhi*. Lurking in both stories is a contrast between 'wrong' and 'right' solitude that we have encountered elsewhere. Yet, the *Paramatthajotikā* reveals an important narrative point in that that certain kings and princes may be karmically linked to other *paccekabuddhas* who encourage them to renounce and, in some cases, teach them in a limited way. For non-royals like the financier's son, *paccekabodhi* requires greater determination and self-effort. In the absence of a teaching from a *paccekabuddha*, awakening is not guaranteed, so his story focuses on perfecting determination and effort early in renunciate life. There being only one story about a non-royal also suggests that for them, *paccekabodhi* is rarer and much harder won.¹³⁷

We have already seen that self-reliance, if not involving total independence on teachings, is an important connecting factor to the stories of *paccekabuddhas* in the *Paramatthajotikā*. So, does renunciation of kingship provide us with a convincing accompaniment to this association? Some may quite rightly point out that a renouncing king is not necessarily destined to become a *paccekabuddha*. Bhaddiya's story is a case in point. According to his own hagiography, Bhaddiya attained awakening as a *sāvaka*.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ The commentary to Sn 50 at Pj II 90-100.

¹³⁶ The commentary to Sn 54 at Pj II 103-06.

¹³⁷ The commentary makes it clear that *paccekabodhisattas* can arise in families of householders as well as *khattiyas* and *brāhmaṇas* Pj II 51, 15-17.

¹³⁸ According to the *Cullavagga* of the *Vinaya*, Bhaddiya Kāḷigodhā was one of six Sākiyan princes including Ānanda, Anuruddha, Bhagu, Kimbila and Devadatta, who went forth at the same time and were ordained by the Buddha, (Vin II 182ff).

Furthermore, all the hagiographies of *paccekabuddhas* in the *Paramatthajotikā* occur during times when no full *buddhas* are present to teach. The focus is on the independent realisation that there is something worth pursuing that is far more valuable than kingly life. Kloppenborg regarded the *paccekabuddha* as ‘just a kind of ascetic’.¹³⁹ Others have taken the view that the *paccekabuddha* fills a gap in the categories of awakened beings.¹⁴⁰ As such, *paccekabuddhas* appear as examples of independent ascetic exemplars who fill a void between periods where full *buddhas* do exist and teach in the world.

One interpretation may be that *paccekabuddhas* are exceptional and rare over time. Kings, although not uncommon in the history of India, are exceptional in that they represent the highest strata of household life. In the purview of the *Paramatthajotikā*, certain kings are ineluctably drawn to renounce. Although *paccekabodhi* may appear easier for select kings and princes to achieve than for ordinary householders, we must be reminded that we are dealing with a distinct commentarial vision. In contrast to real modern royalty who conceal or deny their transgressions, these mythical Indian kings openly admit to their or others’ suffering. In several cases, *paccekabodhi* is predicated by renunciation of great wealth and status to clear an immense path for self-effort and wisdom to flourish. When kings do renounce, they do so without hesitation suggesting that there is already a level of insight. The preliminary stages of insight and the attainment of *jhāna* are more worthy of protection than kingly wealth and property. They go on to awaken through perfecting the knowledge they develop themselves.

In sum, what I suggest appears to be narrated most clearly and persistently in these stories is the correlation between the *paccekabodhisatta* and awakening through renouncing the highest form of worldly life. At a time when the teaching of perfectly enlightened *buddhas* is absent, awakening is rare and precious. It is so precious, that individual effort, courage, self-reliance and great wisdom are associated with kings who abandon kingdoms — the highest renunciation possible.

¹³⁹ Kloppenborg, *The paccekabuddha*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁰ Appleton, *Jātaka Stories and Paccekabuddhas*, p. 279. Richard Gombrich calls the *paccekabuddha* an ‘interstitial figure’ between a *sammāsambuddha* and the *sāvaka**buddha*. Richard, Gombrich, Review of Ria Kloppenborg, *The Paccekabuddha*, in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 74 no. 1, (1979), 78-80.

3.7 Khaggavisāṇa-sutta as doctrine, rhetoric and art

Even though renouncing royals link all (but one) of the stories of *paccekabuddhas* in the commentary, the *Cūlaniddesa* regards the *paccekabuddha* as ‘single’ (*eka*) in six aspects:¹⁴¹

1. in the way considered as going forth
2. in the sense of being without a second, or ‘partner’ (*adutiya*)
3. in the sense of abandoning craving
4. being totally free from lust (*ekantavīta-rāga, -dosa - moha*)
5. having travelled the path ‘going to one (place)’ (*ekāyanamaggam gato*)¹⁴²
6. having fully awakened to unsurpassed *pacceka* awakening (*paccekasambodhi*).

The *Cūlaniddesa* goes on to describe ‘going forth’ (1) and ‘without a partner’ (2) in the same two ways described to the *Mahāniddesa* description of *eka* for Sn 816 mentioned earlier. The *Mahāniddesa* explanation of physical seclusion in Sn 816, ‘separated from the group’, corresponds to ‘living without a partner’ in the *Cūlaniddesa* explanation of the *paccekabuddha*’s devotion to forests and quiet places for meditation. Another difference is that the *Cūlaniddesa* mentions a causal link between the first three senses of *eka* for the *paccekabuddha*.¹⁴³ So, ‘when he goes forth (1), alone he resorts to forest groves, remote lodgings suitable for seclusion’.¹⁴⁴ ‘Being thus alone, without a partner (2), dwelling heedful, ardent and resolute...he abandoned the net of craving...’ (3).¹⁴⁵ As we have already seen, all these first three senses of *eka* are found in the *KVS*, as detailed above. The causal link supports my earlier point that conceives the practice of *kāyaviveka* in religious life in terms of a second layer of renunciation from ‘society’.

Being ‘totally free of lust’ (4) is elaborated in the *Cūlaniddesa* as being free from all three unwholesome roots (*rāga, moha and dosa*),¹⁴⁶ which also appears in the *KVS* as we have seen in relation to the end of the path (Sn 74). This leaves *eka* in the sense of a

¹⁴¹ Nidd II 210-12.

¹⁴² Here *ekāyana* is ‘going to one’ as in a single path directed to *nibbāna* that is unified and well defined for a mind directed to the goal. The second translation as ‘travelled by one’ i.e. narrow path is also possible. See Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p. 64.

¹⁴³ This is absent in the two-fold classification of *eko* in the *Mahāniddesa*.

¹⁴⁴ Nidd II 210. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 421.

¹⁴⁵ Nidd II 210. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 421.

¹⁴⁶ Nidd II 211.

path ‘going to one’ (5) and as *pacceka-sambodhi* (6). Although as we have already seen, (5) is associated with five different meanings, it is elaborated by the *Cūḷaniddesa* as the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment.¹⁴⁷ Although the *KVS* does not mention the various path factors individually, many of them can be assumed in the verses (e.g. *paññā* in Sn 51, *saddhā* in Sn 58, *sati* in Sn 70, *samādhi* in Sn 71 and *virīya* in Sn 68). The path can be considered unified and directed one-way or ‘uniquely’ when defined by these factors. It therefore supports the notion of the mind ‘moving’ in one direction and kept there by repeated practice. The sixth classification is clearly what distinguishes the *paccekabuddha* since, as *pacceka-sambuddha*, his awakening is comparable to a *sammā-sambuddha*.¹⁴⁸ The *Cūḷaniddesa* explains that from the knowledge attained through the factors of awakening, *paccekabuddhas* become fully awakened to the three marks and the four noble truths.¹⁴⁹ The *KVS* makes this point using lion imagery (Sn 71-2) and the same epithet is used of the Buddha in the *Hemavata-sutta* (Sn 166) and the *Sela-sutta*.¹⁵⁰

Although the rhinoceros’s single horn does evoke physical seclusion, the vision of solitude in the *KVS* is not restricted to literal seclusion. Physical seclusion in the forest has minimum expression in the verses. Similarly, physical seclusion in the *Paramatthajotikā* has only a limited emphasis in the lives of the *paccekabuddhas* depicted there. This suggests that physical solitude is an important theme but not the most consistent one. It nevertheless reminds us of the recommendation for physical seclusion that appears in some parts of the *nikāyas*. In the *Cūḷaniddesa*, we see how a *paccekabuddha* is one who delights in seclusion and does not neglect *jhāna* by frequenting empty places:

*so paccekasambuddho paṭisallānārāmo hoti paṭisallānarato ajjhantaṃ
cetosaṃsamānuyutto anirākatājjhāno vipassanāya samannāgato brūhetā
suññāgāraṃ jhāyī jhānarato ekattamanuyutto sadatthagarakoti
paṭisallānaṃ.*¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Nidd II 211.

¹⁴⁸ For a summary of the difference between a *sammā-sambuddha* and a *paccekabuddha*, see Kloppenborg, *The Paccekabuddha*, p. 19ff.

¹⁴⁹ Nidd II 213.

¹⁵⁰ Sn III 102-12.

¹⁵¹ Nidd II 269: ‘The *paccekabuddha* is one who delights in seclusion, who is delighted with seclusion, **who is intent upon internal serenity of mind, who does not neglect jhāna, who possesses insight, who frequents empty houses**, a meditator who is delighted with *jhāna*, intent upon solitude, who esteems his own good’. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 486.

We also see a very similar message in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, that describes how any *bhikkhu* can train in *cittaviveka* based on monastic virtue and *kāyaviveka*:

*sīlesv-ev'assa paripūrakārī ajjhataṃ cetosamatham-anuyutto
anirākatajjhāno vipassanāya samannāgato brūhetā suññāgārānaṃ.*¹⁵²

The overlap in language serves to remind us that a *sutta* that represents the singular vision of an ostensibly forest-dwelling minority overlaps with a salient feature of the gradual path generally, and how the instruction for physical seclusion in some form, if not strict forest practice, is applicable for all *bhikkhus/bhikkhunīs*.

Several other themes can be traced to support *ekacariyā* as a multivalent concept with a stress on renunciate life in general, including guarding and separating oneself from unfavourable companions. However, according to the *Cūḷaniddesa*, a *paccekabuddha*'s literal solitude is only one of six aspects of what I suggest is better conceived as 'singleness'.¹⁵³ Striving as *ekacariyā* can, in other words, be translated as 'living singly' rather than the more restricted sense of 'living alone'. The term *ekacariyā* is conceived in notions of homelessness, celibacy and minimal companionship. Free of distractions to renunciate life, meditative effort keeps the mind moving one way through repeated practice towards the goal.

Even if physical seclusion is only one factor in a multivalent concept, we must not neglect that some, like Clarke, would still argue that this concept is part of rhetoric of a romanticised picture of Buddhist renunciation. If the value of the *sutta* may be located in multiple meanings, do the verses actually inspire *bhikkhus* to practice physical seclusion in the forest like the heroic exemplars that they represent? It is clearly not possible to answer know the extent to which this the case over the history of Buddhist monasticism. Nevertheless, some archaeological evidence has revealed that 'forest dwellers' did exist and perhaps more prevalent than imagined.¹⁵⁴ I suggest that the message of the *KVS* is not that distant from the message contained in normative descriptions of the gradual path that we have encountered so far. That is, physical

¹⁵² M I 33, 9-11: '...let him fulfil the precepts, be **devoted to internal serenity of mind, not neglect meditation, be possessed of insight, and dwell in empty huts.**' Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 115.

¹⁵³ The *Paramatthajotikā* condenses these meanings of *eko* to five aspects. A *paccekabuddha* is alone: 1. having gone forth, 2. living without companion, 3. having abandoned craving, 4. being completely free of corruptions and 5. having attained *paccekabodhi*. Pj II 64, 2-4.

¹⁵⁴ For example, see Brancaccio, *The Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad*. 52.

seclusion is part of a continuum of practice, aimed at abandoning the causes of suffering, that connects the act of going forth from the household with successive stages of *samādhi*, the acquiring of knowledge and the full realisation of the four noble truths. Whilst the imagery and narrative related to this process could be called ‘rhetoric’, it is bound up with the practical aspects of the path. The cessation of suffering means bringing all factors of the path to fulfilment through the continuous practise of physical and mental effort.

It is important to recognise that a doctrinal reading of the *sutta* only provides a single perspective and the power of imagery is obviously a main feature of the *sutta*. I have not paid much attention to the aesthetic quality of the *sutta* as Buddhist poetry. On this point, Eviatar Shulman has argued that the *sutta* should be read primarily as poetry.¹⁵⁵ If we examine the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* as poetry, is there a correlation with the emphasis on renunciate life in general already identified?

Shulman has argued that the primary motivation of the authors of Buddhist poetry is the ‘aesthetic resonance’ of the verses. For Shulman, the image of the ‘lonely recluse’ sits comfortably with the image of a solitary rhinoceros.¹⁵⁶ Yet as Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu shows, every example of Indian poetry has a ‘savour’ (*rasa*) with a corresponding emotion.¹⁵⁷ The verses then appear as an aesthetic gloss on ascetic life and artistic expression of emotion. The reader/listener’s experience of the poem involves reflecting on the feature of the text (‘tasting its savour’) rather than directly experiencing the emotion.¹⁵⁸ The ‘savour’ of many (if not all) of the verses of the *KVS* is the ‘heroic’ with an emotion related to energy. Thus, several of the verses on renunciation include verbs relating to ‘letting go’.¹⁵⁹ Meditative life is typically evoked by the ‘removal’ of mental corruptions.¹⁶⁰ Even verses about ‘ideal companions’ should be seen with religious endeavour in mind. One should stick with wise companions having first ‘overcome all

¹⁵⁵ Eviatar Shulman, ‘The *Aṭṭhakavagga* as Buddhist poetry’, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 35 No. 1-2 (2012), 363-411.

¹⁵⁶ Shulman, *Aṭṭhakavagga*, p. 390.

¹⁵⁷ Ṭhānissaro identifies eight principal emotions/savours: love/sensitive, humour/comic, grief/compassionate, anger/furious, energy/heroic, fear/apprehensive, disgust/horrific and astonishment/marvellous. *Poems of the Elders: An Anthology from the Theragāthā and Therīgāthā*. (Valley Center: Metta Forest Monastery, 2015), p. 5.

¹⁵⁸ The principle of this abstraction being that even if emotions are negative, they can instil a sense of appreciation and empathy. Ṭhānissaro, *Poems of the Elders*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁹ E.g. *oropeti* (Sn 44), *jahāti* (Sn 60) and *vipitṭhikaroti* (Sn 67).

¹⁶⁰ E.g. *sandāleti* (Sn 62) and *vyapanudati* (Sn 66).

danger'¹⁶¹ and seek out learned and noble friends having 'removed doubt'.¹⁶² The creative force of the 'heroic' savour is quite specific to the Buddhist path when perceived as insight into the causes of suffering¹⁶³ by those who possess knowledge (*mutimant*).¹⁶⁴ Accompanied by energy exerted (*ārabhati*) towards the goal,¹⁶⁵ the aesthetic impressions of many verses do resonate with doctrinal imports of *ekacariyā*, or 'living singly' already identified. The dominant 'savour' is of energy wholly directed to a 'narrow' path leading one way.

3.8 Living like the single horn of a rhinoceros

The *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* is at once a doctrinal and artistic expression of *ekacariyā*. As already discussed, either rhinoceros or its horn are applicable to the central image of its title and refrain. This ambiguity allows for no single theme to dominate and strengthens the layered meanings to 'singleness' at play through *sutta* and commentary. The ambiguity is also somewhat supported by the image of the rhinoceros itself as a mysterious beast. The deer and elephant, who also appear in the verses, are familiar motifs in the Pāli image world.¹⁶⁶ Yet the rhinoceros is relatively uncommon in Buddhist texts.¹⁶⁷ If the rhinoceros's habitat is restricted to alluvial plains and grasslands,¹⁶⁸ it is reasonable to assume that deer and elephant were perhaps more familiar to people in ancient and pre-modern India. The rhinoceros's elusive nature would have added to its mystery and clearly aided the poetic image of solitude. Thus, as a 'legendary animal that exists in the world', the rhinoceros is clearly an effective simile for either a *paccekabuddha* or the renouncer in the *KVS* as solitary wanderer.

¹⁶¹ Sn 45; *abhibhuyya sabbāni parissayāni*.

¹⁶² Sn 58: *vineyya kaṃkhaṃ*

¹⁶³ E.g. Sn 51: *etaṃ bhayaṃ kāmaguṇesu disvā...*

¹⁶⁴ Sn 61.

¹⁶⁵ Sn 68.

¹⁶⁶ At S I 199,²¹⁻²² a deer is used as a simile for a *bhikkhu* who roams independently after the rains retreat and at Vin I 353, ²¹⁻²² (and S I 28,¹¹) an elephant is compared to a king who is independent and displays great endurance.

¹⁶⁷ Generally contained in the *Jātakas* and the *Milindapañha*, see Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 219.

¹⁶⁸ W.A. Laurie, E.M. Lang and C.P. Groves, 'Rhinoceros unicornis', *Mammalian Species*, 211 (1983), 1-6, (p. 3). <https://doi.org/10.2307/3504002>.

Although the poetic savour of ‘energy’ tends to support the image of a rhinoceros, the imagery of the *KVS* verses is not restricted to literal solitude. Physical seclusion is neither the main theme of the verses nor the central motif of the commentary. The delight of seclusion is not especially limited to a *paccekabuddha* but is shared by all *buddhas* and indeed all those who practise solitude ‘rightly’. As the only animal to have a single horn, a rhinoceros would certainly have been considered ‘odd’. The single horn is a unique feature of the Indian rhinoceros and the compiler of the verses would have known its distinction to other animals. If it is correct to assume that few people at the time of the *sutta*’s composition would have encountered a rhinoceros, it is not unreasonable to think that the compiler would have wanted to emphasise its distinct feature. It seems to me appropriate to posit that it is the rhinoceros’s singular feature rather than its habit that is emphasised in the title and refrain of a *sutta*. My point is supported by the multivalent concept of *ekacariyā* as ‘singleness’ that can be traced in both *sutta* and commentary. It seems to me that the message is that one should practise ‘singly’ as a rhinoceros’s horn is ‘single’. My reasoning clearly rests on the assumption that the *khagga*, or rhinoceros was less well known than a deer or elephant to the average *bhikkhu*, which is far from certain. Although the elusive behaviour of the rhinoceros would add to the notion of solitude, it would have had less of an impact as a motif than the more familiar deer, elephant or lion that may have been more commonly associated with solitude. The rhinoceros’s mysterious horn, however, would have had. Therefore, ‘Horn of the Rhinoceros Sutta’, although clumsy to the modern English reader, seems more authentic than ‘Rhinoceros Sutta’ especially if *ekacariyā* as ‘singleness’ is, as I suggest, a distinctive characterisation of several features of Buddhist renunciate life.

3.9 Conclusion

The enigmatic *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* has aroused the interest of scholars for the best part of a century. My own contribution has been to engage with the literature which I have found to be on the whole problematic in two regards. Firstly, there is an assumption that the verses are predominantly about the solitary life in a literal sense that restricts the meaning to a heroic few. Secondly, the canonical association with *paccekabuddhas* has been, in the main, dismissed or sidestepped without a proper analysis of the commentaries. I have offered some further thoughts to these points by exploring the concept of *ekacariyā*, like other Pāli terms for solitude, both literally and figuratively.

There exists in Pāli a consistent play on the use of *eka* that cannot be expressed easily by the English word ‘alone’ and which allows *ekacariyā* to be better understood as ‘singleness’. As such, *ekacariyā* accommodates several concrete and abstract senses of ‘practising singly’, including celibacy, physical seclusion, and meditative effort directed and maintained one way along a unified path. Although *ekacariyā* is repeated within the refrain of most verses, physical seclusion is not the only distinctive theme. What is just as distinctive about ‘practising singly’ in the verses is renunciate life in general distinguished by a path that is narrow, travelled by one person and one alone. That we find solitude and renunciation closely linked themes, in my view, suggests how the practice of physical seclusion is part of the same continuum of a ‘narrow/single path’ that connects the act of going forth, meditative attainment and awakening knowledge.

In the verses of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*, *ekacariyā* is seen mainly in terms of a particularly determined commitment to the path. We learn that the renouncer eventually leaves behind even the best kind of company on the ‘narrow path’. Interpreted this way, the *sutta* poetically expresses ‘right solitude’ that is consistent with the general theme of the gradual path where an impulse for seclusion exists prior to going forth and steadfastly continues to be part of meditative life. Whilst the overall theme of ‘energetic effort’ resonates with hermit types, it also connects with what I earlier suggested is a call for repeated and frequent practice of meditative seclusion. We can note terminology expressed in repeated formulae for forest practice and how, in stories of *paccekabuddhas*, meditative delight fuelling deeper stages of *samādhi* is predicated on being physically secluded. There also appears to be some overlap between the six ways *eka* is understood in relation to a perfectly awakened being and the verses of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*. In these ultimate expressions of solitude, not only can we see how the *sutta* links more directly with the final goal but also how individual path factors must be fulfilled and completed.

We cannot know the original intentions of the *Cūlaniddesa* compiler for making a canonical link between the *KVS* and the *paccekabuddha*. Nevertheless, we can say that the association left an imaginative impression on the later commentaries. Even if *pacceka/pratyeka* was originally understood as ‘solitary’ by the *Cūlaniddesa*, its classification of *eka* in six aspects tells us that a *paccekabuddha*’s ‘singleness’ need not be understood in any fixed way. A *paccekabuddha*’s ‘singleness’ is as expansive as a perfectly enlightened *buddha*’s given that almost the same six-fold classification is

applied separately to the Buddha.¹⁶⁹ Although solitude may characterise *paccekabuddhas*, later commentaries show that *paccekabodhisattas* are consistently linked by stories of renouncing kings. *Paccekabodhi* is more clearly associated with individual self-reliance and wisdom and not necessarily predicated on forest meditation. Both these motifs better support an alternative rendering of *pacceka/pratyeka* as Appleton translates as ‘independent’ rather than ‘solitary’.¹⁷⁰ The motif of kingly renunciation is also supported by the notion of renunciant life in general that is a major theme in the *sutta* itself. We could then suggest that the commentator of the *Paramatthajotikā* perhaps compiled stories of *paccekabuddhas* with this correlation in mind — when no *buddhas* are present to teach, awakening is rare and precious. Those that did awaken in the stories are no ordinary householders, but those whose unique insight and determination made renunciation of the highest form of wealth inevitable. Understood so, *ekacariyā* can also be conceived in terms of a radical minimalism towards wealth, property and community and a way of life firmly committed one way: The Noble Eightfold Path.

Although previous literature has helped to identify an ambiguity in the compound *khaggavisāṇa*, scholars have tended to focus on ‘rhinoceros’ rather than ‘rhinoceros’s horn’ as most appropriate in representing physical seclusion. The question may appear trivial compared to the enormity of the religious task, but it seems that the ambiguity is deliberate. I believe that with ‘rhinoceros’, we lose something of the depth of meaning to the verses. I have opted for ‘rhinoceros’s horn’ as both the titular motif of the *sutta* and refrain of its verses as it is more consistent with *ekacariyā* as a multivalent concept that encompasses both solitude and renunciate life in its wider sense.

¹⁶⁹ According to the *Mahāniddeśa* commentary to Sn 956 at Nidd I 454, 19-24. The description differs only in the way referred to as *sammāsambodhi*.

¹⁷⁰ Appleton, *Jātaka Stories and Paccekabuddhas*, n. 3 pp. 279-80.

Chapter 4

‘The Call to the Forest’: Solitude and the Language of the Landscape

*When will I dwell alone,
Without a partner,
In the Great Wood so delightful
My task fulfilled, free from afflictions?¹*

4.1 Introduction

Much of my interpretation of the value of solitude expressed in Pāli literature has relied on imagery. In chapter 1, I argued how a *bhikkhu*’s self-reliance and desirelessness enacted through a second and continued withdrawal from ‘society’ foregrounds the image of a ‘lonely’ or ‘narrow’ path, more formally articulated in Chapter 3. In Chapter 2, I argued that physical seclusion is a salient feature of one aspect of the path not only through frequent reference to repeated formulae, but also in the interplay of imagery of literal domains and psychological states. This interplay also becomes more apparent in Chapter 3, where I argued how the abstract concept of ‘living alone’ is evoked by the image of the single horn of a rhinoceros to poetically inspire interrelated themes of renunciation and physical solitude. In this chapter, imagery specific to landscape will be the focus of a more detailed study to further illuminate how prescriptive values of solitude are imagined in the Buddhist thought world of Pāli literature.

I refer to ‘landscape’ as a collective term for mainly natural, uncultivated places in the wild such as the forest or jungle; the very places usually associated with solitude and religious striving. I will argue that landscape imagery, in what Steven Collins called the Pāli *imaginaire*, is not just a metaphor for physical seclusion, but also what inspires a practical encounter with real secluded places. I will start with a review of literature to show how landscape imagery has been the focus of discussion on Buddhist environmental ethics and why these studies leave a gap in relation to an understanding of the value of solitude in the Pāli Canon. I will examine how landscape figures both practically and ideationally by first exploring the motif of the ‘delightful place’ in

¹ Th 541. Translation adapted from Norman, *Elders’ Verses*, p. 55

landscape. I will explore, with the aid of linguistic models, how conceptual metaphors are grounded in embodied experience and will attempt to show how these models can help us interpret aspects of path psychology. Finally, I will attempt to connect the literature of the Pāli imaginaire with some of the writings of contemporary ‘landscape seers’ to demonstrate why I think the Pāli imaginaire should be considered within a long history of literature that imaginatively locates and attracts attention to the landscape.

4.2 Approaches to landscape and solitude

B. G. Gokhale was one of the first scholars to identify landscape as a particularly striking and central image in Pāli Buddhist texts.² However, for Gokhale, similes are either for intellectual comprehension or literary adornment.³ Steven Collins examined how imagery supports and brings to life theoretical aspects of Buddhist thought. For Collins, the imagery of Pāli texts is the pathway to the unconscious structures that form the ‘social and psychological universe’ of Theravāda Buddhism:

Where Buddhist intellectuals, in the textual tradition, take these patterns of imagery to be merely illustrative of an abstract conceptual account, I take the theoretical constructions of intellectuals to be themselves also illustrations of the underlying, unconscious patterns of imagination to which the imagery found in the textual tradition gives us access.⁴

Collins examined how Buddhist attitudes to selfhood, personality and consciousness, for instance, are expressed with images of leaving home, farming and flowing water in Pāli texts.⁵ Later, Collins explored motifs of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ forest and the regular oscillation between these interpretations within some narratives.⁶

Ian Harris studied nature imagery in the *nikāyas* from the perspective of critical readings of Buddhist environmentalism.⁷ Much of Harris’s views about nature should be

² Balkrishna Govind Gokhale, ‘The Image-World of the Nikāyas’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 100 No. 4 (1980), 445-452 (p. 450).

³ Gokhale, *Image-World of the Nikāyas*, p. 445.

⁴ Collins, *Selfless Persons*, p. 264. Also p. 166.

⁵ Collins, *Selfless Persons*, p. 165ff, 218ff and 247ff.

⁶ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 333.

⁷ Ian Harris, ‘How Environmentalist is Buddhism?’, *Religion* 21 no.2 (1991), 101-114; ‘Causation and Telos: The Problem of Buddhist Environmental Ethics’, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 1 (1994), 45-55; ‘Getting to Grips with Buddhist Environmentalism: A Provisional

considered through his overall argument that since the Buddhist teaching of ‘not self’ (*anattā*)⁸ is fundamentally disteleological, Buddhism cannot provide a satisfactory point of departure for an environmental philosophy or ethic. As such Harris observed, ‘it is very difficult to maintain the value, meaning or purpose of anything’.⁹ And, since nature, landscapes, animal and plant life lack ‘ultimacy’, Harris suggests that at best, those in the environmentalist camp misinterpret early Indian Buddhist doctrine.¹⁰ Harris cites the utopia of the royal city of Ketumatī in the *Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta* as evidence of a perfect world based on purely urban settings.¹¹ However, he neglected to mention the role of the forest and landscape as a triggering condition for the revival of civilisation in the narrative.¹²

Harris did recognise a ‘hermit strand’ to early Buddhism in which the natural landscape is a place for religious practice for the ‘religious virtuoso’.¹³ Verses praising forest practice in the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*, that Harris labelled ‘nature mysticism’, should accordingly be interpreted within the principle of non-attachment rather than a union with nature.¹⁴ Harris made valid points about ‘eco-apologetic’¹⁵ positions as being anachronistic,¹⁶ concluding that such positions may have arisen out of selective readings

Typology’, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* Vol. 2. (1995), 173-190; ‘Buddhism and Ecology’, in *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics*, ed. by Damien Keown, (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 113-35.

⁸ What Buddhism seeks to question is the assumption how self, whether universal or individual, is unchanging or beyond suffering. At S III 66-67, the Buddha teaches his monks how to recognise for themselves that whatever might be considered self is impermanent and hence painful.

⁹ Harris, *Buddhism and Ecology*, p. 122.

¹⁰ Harris. *Buddhism and Ecology*, p. 123.

¹¹ Harris, *How Environmentalist is Buddhism*, p. 108.

¹² Those who abstained from killing lived in the forest, mountains and other inaccessible places for seven days after which the lifespan of humankind started to increase. D II 73, 8-18.

¹³ Harris, *Buddhism and Ecology*, p. 127.

¹⁴ Harris identified voices from canonical passages that stir a sense of ‘identity’ with nature and are suggestive of what he calls a ‘plangent strain of nature mysticism’. *Buddhism and Ecology*, p. 127.

¹⁵ I borrow this term from Harris who quotes it in *Getting to Grips with Buddhist Environmentalism*, p. 181. Donald Swearer labels ‘eco-apologists’ as those who promote a normative ecological Buddhist worldview. Donald K. Swearer, ‘An Assessment of Buddhist Eco-Philosophy’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 99 no. 2 (2006), 123–137 (pp. 124-45).

¹⁶ Harris is especially critical of Joanna Macy whose reading of the early Indian Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) aligns with a modern interpretation of ecology more akin to the expansive teaching of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* of Mahāyāna Buddhism which accommodates the identity and interrelatedness of all life. *Buddhism and Ecology*, p. 125.

on Buddhism.¹⁷ Overall, Harris presented a limited appraisal of the importance of landscape for meditation whilst often conflating the ‘wilderness’ with ‘forest’¹⁸ and concluding that the Pāli Canon takes an overall pro-civilisation position. Moreover, Harris’s own readings of forest imagery either as a place to cultivate for human prosperity¹⁹ or as a desolate and terrifying place, is somewhat reminiscent of certain Biblical interpretations of solitude.²⁰

Other scholars have evaluated conflicting voices in Pāli texts as an ambivalence towards nature. Like Harris, Lambert Schmithausen also recognises a ‘hermit strand’²¹ in which solitude is a central concern. Unlike Harris, Schmithausen is more explicit in identifying a positive evaluation of nature despite the contrasting images of what he also calls ‘wilderness’. In solitary places, the ‘hermit’ subjugates unwholesome mind states and intensifies wholesome faculties. Nature is truly appreciated and enjoyed in the context of freedom from fear and desire, and without that transformation, the ‘wilderness is futile’.²² Although Schmithausen recognises anthropocentric elements in Pāli sources, he recommends that these texts display a ‘hermit attitude’ to nature which should be

¹⁷ Harris. *Buddhism and Ecology*, p. 132.

¹⁸ What Harris refers to as ‘wilderness’ is the Pāli/Sanskrit word *arañña/araṇya* which is better translated as ‘forest’ or ‘jungle’, CPD, s.v. *arañña*. As shown later in this chapter, ‘wilderness’ is more appropriately applied to the word *kantāra* which has a separate meaning and is unequivocally samsaric in its imagery.

¹⁹ In the Bible, the forest as an image of nature and growth is a symbol of prosperity associated directly by several references to it as a source of lumber. Forest growth is considered a ‘divine activity’ since it buffers against the ravages of the wind, presumably to protect cultivated spaces. See *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. by Leland Ryken et al (InterVarsity Press, 2010), p. 302.

²⁰ Harris focuses on a passage at D III 58,¹⁹⁻²³ which exhorts *bhikkhus* to ‘keep to their own pastures’ to escape Māra. Harris argues that passage places more value to cultivated places over the forest, but his choice of passage and overall point appears sympathetic to the Christian position that to be alone without God is to be ‘forsaken’ (and therefore vulnerable to the devil). For example, see David Young, *The Christian's Companion in Solitude: With an Introductory Essay* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1827), p. 274. In this context, being alone is dangerous and associated with loneliness and pain. Māra, who ‘attacks’ those who stray from their ‘own pastures’, appears positioned as a devil-like character who teases out unwholesome behaviour when one is alone.

²¹ Lambert Schmithausen, ‘The Early Buddhist Tradition and Ecological Ethics’, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, no. 4 (1997), 1-74, (p. 25).

²² Schmithausen, *Early Buddhist Tradition and Ecological Ethics*. p. 27.

recognised universally amongst Buddhists.²³ David McMahan appears to argue that the Pāli Canon's apparent ambivalence towards nature is evidence that nature has no sanctity in early Buddhism.²⁴ McMahan shows how some modern Buddhist conceptions of nature and one's relationship to it have arisen out of a hybrid of ideas related to the Mahāyāna teaching of 'interpenetration' and modern cultural phenomena. McMahan's study has also influenced others who argue that modern Buddhist conceptions towards the forest are a hybrid of this canonical ambivalence and modernist attitudes of escape from society and a need for recreation.²⁵

McMahan's assessment of forest practice, like Harris's is constrained by wider eco-ethical questions. For example, MacMahan takes *mettā* (loving-kindness) meditation to illustrate how early Buddhist practice does not involve any sense of self-expansion or encompassing of selfhood with other beings or nature. However, MacMahan risks positing a view based on a restricted reading of textual sources; a problem that he attributes to others who articulate contemporary ideas within the doctrine of 'interpenetration'. McMahan does this by restricting *mettā* to an inter-personal exercise and omitting to mention that the practice traditionally starts with oneself and is linked to forest withdrawal. The practice of *mettā* is susceptible to certain modernist tendencies to promote universal concerns or 'oceanic compassion'²⁶ over individual liberation. His recapitulation of *mettā* meditation as a practice to 'train the mind to cultivate this compassion and loving-kindness toward all beings'²⁷ is suggestive of this. However, the

²³ He writes that this attitude is 'an ambiance or eco-system comprising a specific set of species of animals, plants, is accorded a positive value, and on account of this positive evaluation it ought to be not only preserved but restored'. Lambert Schmithausen, *Buddhism and Nature the Lecture Delivered on the Occasion of the Expo 1990: An Enlarged Version with Notes*, (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1991), 14-21, (p. 20).

²⁴ David L. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 155.

²⁵ See Brooke Schedneck, 'Forest as Challenge, Forest as Healer: Reinterpretations and Hybridity within the Forest Tradition of Thailand', *Pacific World*, 3rd series no. 12 (2011), 1-24.

²⁶ Perhaps to those influenced by Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (as well as several other Mahāyāna texts) where the emphasis on 'the other' might have led to an understanding that the central point in Buddhism is about looking after others, and, that self-kindness is subordinate to this. Śāntideva describes self-concern as 'fiendish' and concern for others as 'divine' (Bca VI 125). He praises those who 'oppress oneself for another' (Bca VI 126) and attributes suffering to those who seek happiness for themselves (Bca IV 129). For a translation of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* see Karen Crosby, and Andrew Skilton, *Bodhicaryavatara* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

²⁷ McMahan. *Buddhist Modernism*, p. 156.

*Karaṇīyametta-sutta*²⁸ is traditionally chanted as a *paritta* for personal protection. Although MacMahan is correct to point out that *mettā* meditation does not lead to an ontological unity with other beings,²⁹ other passages tell us that it is the mysterious and sometimes difficult experience of forest practice that occasions loving-kindness in the first place.³⁰

More recent studies into landscape imagery in Buddhism give only a limited treatment of the Pāli sources. Daud Ali explores the dual character of gardens as both real and imagined places of felicity among early Indian élite society. Ali notes how gardens or *ārāmas* ('pleasure parks'), of wealthy householders became associated with settled monastics.³¹ He describes how courtly gardens mirror celestial gardens but how the latter are removed of worldly sensuality in favour of heavenly abundance.³² Akira Shimada posits that descriptions of royal gardens in ancient India are 'prescriptive and poetical' representations of both public and private life.³³ Following Ali, Shimada cites the later *Lalitavistara* for descriptions of gardens in Buddhist texts. Such places are consonant with celestial rather than earthly descriptions of landscape found in another Mahāyāna text, the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*.³⁴ Shimada then shows that whilst texts are consistent in their absence of *kāma* (desire) elements in their depictions of gardens, Buddhist *stūpa* iconography makes ample reference to more sensual garden practices alongside sacred adornments. Shimada suggests that the mixed *stūpa* depictions 'hierarchise, encompass

²⁸ Sn 143-152.

²⁹ McMahan, *Buddhist Modernism*, p. 157.

³⁰ In the commentary to the *Karaṇīya-metta-sutta*, five hundred *bhikkhus* who were meditating under trees at the fringes of the forest near the Himālaya were harassed by vengeful tree-deities. The frightened *bhikkhus* left the forest to seek out the Buddha who taught them the *Mettā-sutta* as a 'weapon' (*āvudha*) to be 'taken wherever they go.' Protected by their chanting of the verses, the *bhikkhus* returned to the forest where they were able to resume their meditation, Dh-p-a I 313-18. Also, at A II 732-73, one safeguards and protects oneself from all manner of forest creatures (snakes, rodents, scorpions, etc.) by practising loving-kindness towards them. See also Vin II 109-10. The story is elaborated in the *Khandha Vatta Jātaka* (J II 144-48) which links it more closely to forest practice.

³¹ Daud Ali, 'Gardens in Early Indian Court Life', *Studies in History*, Vol. 19, no. 2 (2003), 221-52, (p. 244).

³² Ali uses the examples of heavenly jewelled trees of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*. *Gardens in Early Indian Court Life*, p. 247.

³³ Akira Shimada, 'The Use of Garden Imagery in Early Indian Buddhism: Histories from the Deccan', in *Garden and Landscape Practice in Pre-colonial India*, ed. by Daud Ali and Emma J. Flatt (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 18-38, (p. 19).

³⁴ Shimada, *Garden Imagery*, pp. 23-24.

and ultimately control' *kāma*.³⁵ Whilst these studies usefully highlight the hierarchies in Buddhist cosmology and how the ideal garden/nature was conceived in ancient India, they neglect the imagery of earthly landscape from the perspective of an ordinary *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhuni*'s experience of understanding and escaping *saṃsāra*.

Although nature and landscape in Buddhist texts have been acknowledged in secondary literature and its function as metaphor studied in some detail, a study of literary themes related to solitude is generally lacking. The approach of this chapter is that the simple negative/positive dichotomy is too simplistic to fully appreciate how landscape imagery is presented. On the question of environmental ethics, I concur with Pragati Sahni whose survey of scholarship shows that canonical answers are not straightforward.³⁶ Sahni rightly concludes that relying on analogies to derive clues about a Buddhist environmental ethic is problematic due to conflicting images of ecological or environmental references.³⁷

The value of nature and landscape imagery in the Pāli texts is better understood in relation to the religious goal of personal liberation. Shimada usefully highlights interesting tensions and juxtapositions of highly sensual depictions of desire that are incompatible with renunciate life.³⁸ We know that, ultimately, all desire must be abandoned. A passage in the *Potaliya-sutta* compares sensual pleasures to an illusion using the example of a man who dreams about delightful parks, meadows and lakes.³⁹ However, this need not mean, as Weber suggested, that mundane levels of joy have no place in the path.⁴⁰ According to the *Bhikkhuni-sutta*, desire can have a function in the

³⁵ Erotic art found on *stūpas* is segregated from sacred images. According to Shimada they simultaneously differentiate from and beautify religious imagery. *Garden Imagery*, pp. 33-34.

³⁶ Pragati Sahni, *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism: A Virtues Approach* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 8-31. Sahni's own position is that, despite the plurality of views, a Buddhist environmental virtue ethic can be identified from the Pāli *Nikāyas*.

³⁷ Sahni points out that although nurturing seeds is an environmentally positive, its imagery is linked with the growth of lust and delusion. *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism*, p. 61.

³⁸ Shimada, *Garden Imagery*, p. 33.

³⁹ M I 365, 29-35.

⁴⁰ 'Of what use was the splendour of the world and of life when it was incessantly beset by the three evils – sickness, age and death; when all surrender to earthly beauty only enhances pain and, above all, the senselessness of the departure ever and again in an infinity of new lives? The absolute senselessness of ephemeral beauty, happiness, and joy in an everlasting world is precisely that which in the end devalues the goods of the world.' Weber, *The Religion of India*, p. 208.

path when it is skilfully directed towards ending suffering.⁴¹ The *Potaliya-sutta* passage speaks of how desire is ultimately abandoned with the destruction of all taints, when one sees things as they really are (*yathābhūta*) with Right Wisdom (*sammappaññā*).⁴² Weber's approach assumes that all 'desire' is basically the same and, as such, always problematic. However, the appreciation of nature can be seen as a wholesome desire especially when it is an aspiration towards escaping suffering.

My approach to imagery owes much to the work of Collins insofar as he explored forest motifs in considerable detail and showed how some imaginative attitudes to nature display interesting tensions. However, my focus is different, given that Collins opted to study solitude from the perspective of 'house' imagery and gave a limited treatment of more visceral images of landscape that inspire the experience of untamed nature.⁴³ Although my argument aligns somewhat with Schmithausen's evaluation of nature within his 'hermit strand', my aim is to focus on the relationship between nature and solitary practice as a vital aspect of the path generally, not just for 'hermits'. I draw inspiration from Nathan Katz when he writes 'it [the natural world] is present in very early Buddhist writings as well, and no amount of overly-scholastic interpretations of the Theravāda can negate their presence and their integrality to Pali Buddhism.'⁴⁴

Katz's quotation brings me to another difference in my approach which is to draw parallels between Pāli literature and contemporary nature writers. Robert Macfarlane⁴⁵ is a traveller, author and scholar who writes persuasively about human relationships with nature. Although Macfarlane's work is not aimed at religious discourse, he writes metaphorically of a 'forest inside our minds'⁴⁶ and of the mutual impressions between landscape, human spirit and language.⁴⁷ Macfarlane gains inspiration from other

⁴¹ A II 144-47. There are four conditions that feed the continuity of the body (rebirth): nutriment, craving, conceit and sexual intercourse. Of the four, the first three including craving and conceit, can be used to some advantage along the path. But sexual intercourse can never be of help.

⁴² M I 365, 34-35.

⁴³ For a good discussion of the pitfalls of Collins' evaluation of nature imagery in terms of a simple dichotomy, see Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p. 251.

⁴⁴ Nathan Katz, *Buddhist Images of Human Perfection* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), p. 24.

⁴⁵ Much of MacFarlane's work is motivated by his desire to replace what has been lost in modern parlance – place-terms of the wild that bring 'story and metaphor.' Robert MacFarlane, *Landmarks*. London: Penguin, 2015), p. 4.

⁴⁶ Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, p. 108.

⁴⁷ Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, p. 13.

traveller/writers who speak of a transformative union with nature.⁴⁸ Within such experiences, Macfarlane sees a congruence with Buddhism, that Harris might call Buddhist ‘eco-apologetics’. Yet as Harris and others have argued, although Pāli texts contain many passages that describe in radical terms lone encounters in the wild, they do not describe this experience in terms of any ontological union with nature that Macfarlane’s brief reference to Buddhism suggests. Despite the neo-romantic influences of some nature writers, it may still be fruitful to compare the Pāli imaginaire with contemporary studies of those who have invested time alone in the landscape.

4.3 Towards a metaphorical understanding of landscape

In literary analysis, an image is a word that evokes sense impressions of a concrete phenomenon such as a place (e.g. forest) or action (e.g. to enter). The imagery of metaphor, simile and parable is a distinctive and ubiquitous feature of Indian religious texts that can help to determine abstract subtexts of thought and practice. Naomi Appleton highlights how the sound of two bracelets on one arm helps King Janaka to renounce his kingdom in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*⁴⁹ — part of the tapestry of imagery shared with Jain sources relating to the renunciation of kings in Indian religious literature.⁵⁰ Collins wrote extensively on how imagery is consciously used as metaphorical representation of thought and doctrine.⁵¹ Collins concluded that imagery is a ‘fundamental structure of the imagination’.⁵² There is, therefore, a clear recognition that imagery is not purely an ornamental feature of Buddhist texts but something more purposeful with regards to the goal of religious life.

Studies into cognitive linguistics posit that conceptual metaphors help bridge the gap between domains of thought, particularly abstract concepts evoked by concrete domains. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphors are shaped by our

⁴⁸ Macfarlane sources Nan Shepherd’s *The Living Mountain* to discuss the relevance of ‘bodily thinking’ in relation to Shepherd’s own experiences. MacFarlane sees some congruence with the work of Buddhist poet and forester, Gary Snyder who writes, ‘That’s the way to see the world: in our bodies’. Quoted in *Landmarks*, p. 72.

⁴⁹ J VI 30-68.

⁵⁰ Naomi Appleton, *Shared Characters*, p. 138.

⁵¹ Collins, *Selfless Persons*, p. 265.

⁵² Collins, *Selfless Persons*, p. 175.

embodiment.⁵³ As an example, they show how the concept of ‘argument’ is structured around the language of war – attack, defend, shoot down, etc. They then label this type of conceptual (or structural) metaphor by the convention: ‘argument is war’. Lakoff and Johnson argue that there is a neural basis for metaphor and conclude that human thought processes are structured this way.⁵⁴ As a result, even abstract thought has sensorimotor experience as its domain. For instance, ‘falling in love’ uses a verb of motion in space to convey a change in psychological state.⁵⁵ Others have similarly argued for the direct links between embodied experience and poetic language.⁵⁶

Lakoff and Johnson’s theories have been used by Joanna Jurewicz to illuminate the deeply abstract concept of *ṛtā* in the *R̥gveda*.⁵⁷ Jurewicz analyses the primary metaphor of cows and bulls following a leader cow to show how the imagery evoked in its ‘source domains’⁵⁸ (dawns, rivers, fire, Soma and thoughts) express life-giving processes that ‘follow’ the abstract concept of *ṛtā* as primordial and ritual energy⁵⁹ in the ‘target domain’. Movement along a path is then understood and enacted in ritual and in moral life. What Jurewicz shows is how even very abstract concepts could be interpreted from conceptual metaphors rooted in sensorimotor experience. As we shall see, these methods can help us to understand abstract concepts related to psychological transformation through sensorimotor imagery involving landscape.

It is worthwhile examining how the above linguistic models could apply generally to Buddhist conceptual source and target domains. Adopting Lakoff and

⁵³ ‘The conceptual structure is grounded in physical and cultural experience, as are the conventional metaphors. Meaning, therefore, is never dis-embodied or objective and is always grounded in the acquisition and use of a conceptual system.’ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 197.

⁵⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 258.

⁵⁶ ‘We argue that the poetic value and the communicative expressiveness of metaphoric language partly arises from its roots in people’s ordinary, felt sensations of their bodies in action.’ Raymond W. Gibbs Jr, Paula Lenz Costa Lima, and Edson Francozo, ‘Metaphor is Grounded in Embodied Experience’, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36 no. 7 (2004), 1189-1210, (p. 1190).

⁵⁷ The Sanskrit term *ṛtā* refers to a concept that connects sacrifice with cosmic and moral law. Joanna Jurewicz, ‘The Concept of *ṛtā* in the *R̥gveda*’ in *Universe and Inner Self in Early Indian and Early Greek Thought*, ed. by Richard Seaford, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 28-39.

⁵⁸ ‘The concept that provides its categories is called the source domain, and the concept which is conceived in its terms is called the target domain.’ Jurewicz, *ṛtā in the R̥gveda*, p. 29.

⁵⁹ Jurewicz, *The Concept of ṛtā in the R̥gveda*, p. 38.

Johnson's convention, we may note that 'taming is restraint' can be understood as a conceptual metaphor applied in monastic life which has, as part of its experiential source domain, the rule that *bhikkhus* must keep their eyes cast down when entering a village.⁶⁰ This idea connects with another simile that compares a *bhikkhu* who has restrained his sense faculties and lives virtuously to a tamed elephant.⁶¹ The verb *ava* + $\sqrt{gāh}$ ('penetrate'⁶²) is taken to mean both physically plunge or immerse into, especially woods or lakes,⁶³ and to penetrate intellectually.⁶⁴ As such it imaginatively permits the metaphor 'knowing is contact' in Buddhist contexts. The former, abstract, target concept (knowing) is given perspective through a sensorimotor image (touching, holding, immersing). It is worth noting here that spatial path verbs are often used for cognitive changes, e.g. 'he went pale', 'he fell into a depression', as in the case of negative or unhealthy transformation. Similarly, in Buddhist contexts, as will be discussed later, path imagery links the possibility of positive cognitive transformation and the vital experience of insight with physical seclusion in the landscape.

What also becomes apparent in Pāli texts is that target concepts related to the religious goal can also be conceived in what is usually considered path domains where imagery can be interpreted both negatively and positively. The principle can be illustrated in the case of fire imagery. Katz shows how fire represents the 'totality of *samsāra*' and is presented very rarely in contrary terms.⁶⁵ When presented in a positive sense, it represents the perfected human. In this context, fire represents light or illumination as well as burning.⁶⁶ In an important *sutta* that counters the Brahmanical literal use of fire in worship, an *arahat* is said to have 'abandoned fire made from wood' but is aflame 'internally' (*ajjhata*).⁶⁷ The verb *jhāpeti*, to which *jhāna* is related, means 'to cause to burn' (defilements) and although it is used very rarely in the *nikāyas*,⁶⁸ its imagery plays an important role in preserving fire/light as a path image. An example of this can be found in the commentary to the *Dhammapada* where a *bhikkhu* gains

⁶⁰ From the *Sekhiyāvatta* of the *Suttavibhaṅga*, Vin IV 186, 29-33.

⁶¹ M I 132-35.

⁶² CPD s.v. *ava-gāhati* usually as *o-gāhati*.

⁶³ E.g. S II 269, 9.

⁶⁴ Especially in commentarial passages, e.g. *gambhīrañāṇehi, ogāhetabbabhāvato*; Ud-a I 1, 16.

⁶⁵ Katz, *Buddhist Images of Human Perfection*, p. 48.

⁶⁶ Katz refers to Th 3.

⁶⁷ S I 169, 21.

⁶⁸ Paravahera Vajirañāna Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society 1975); p. 24.

arahantship as he watches fire consume a forest, thinking ‘even as the fire advances consuming all obstacles great and small, so I should advance....’⁶⁹ In this story, his knowledge of the path keeps him heedful and so able to destroy any obstacle in his way. Therefore, we might permit such illumination imagery to be evoked using the metaphor ‘wisdom is light’ which is usually interpreted in goal-related concepts. However, its source concept, light, is also a path image in the sense that one cannot see without light and without seeing there is no wisdom.⁷⁰ Here, source domain concepts of light/seeing are linked to abstract path aspects related to insight and knowledge. So, the imagery of the source domain need not always be interpreted purely in terms of target concepts connected with the goal of final awakening. This principle will become relevant when we examine how some negative images of nature and landscape are evoked in source domains to articulate important target concepts related to escaping *saṃsāra*, meditative transformation and wisdom.

In Chapter 1, I discussed how the image of ‘open space’, (*abbhokāsa*) blends literal and figurative notions of renunciation. The image demonstrates how mind and place are synonymous even at the beginning of the path. ‘Open space’ not only foregrounds physical seclusion,⁷¹ it is a place devoid of any signs of possession or even identity. ‘Open space’ also metaphorically represents an attitude of non-attachment and letting go that imaginatively contrasts with the ‘dust’ (*raja*) of household life. Although ‘open space’ speaks of some insight or pre-realisation into the nature of *saṃsāra*, it does not necessarily speak of a mind transformed by meditative concentration and so, appears as a neutral image in that regard. As we shall now explore, it is only in imaginative descriptions of ascetic life in which unequivocally positive images of nature and landscape are presented that spiritual happiness, rooted in physical seclusion, is foregrounded.

⁶⁹ Dhp-a I 282, 1-4. Translated by Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 1*, p. 325.

⁷⁰ A point made by Lance Cousins. See Sue Hamilton, *Identity and Experience* (London: Luzac Oriental, 1996), p. 118, n. 103.

⁷¹ The term *abbhokāsa* also appears as part of a list of physical places of landscape in the *Sāmaññaphala* formula for physical seclusion. See Chapter 2.

4.4 The Pleasance

In his treatment of imagery entitled *Selfless Persons*, Collins applied the threefold *Niddesa* classification of *viveka*, discussed in Chapter 2, as an example of how Pāli texts imaginatively articulate the path from ‘home’ to ‘homelessness’ *vis-à-vis* seclusion of body (*kāyaviveka*), of mind or (*cittaviveka*) and seclusion of substrate, (*upādhiviveka*). Collins showed how *cittaviveka*, the process of mental cultivation and purification, uses the canonical metaphor of the ‘border town’ with six gates or doors representing the six senses.⁷² For *upādhiviveka*, Collins cited another vivid canonical passage of the Buddha’s release from ‘building future houses’ at the time of his awakening.⁷³ Collins interpreted *kāyaviveka* using the metaphor of ‘leaving home for homelessness’ (*agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajjā*).⁷⁴ However, Collins’ assessment of *viveka* tends to downplay the role of *kāyaviveka* by putting the focus on the psychological imperative of not having desire as ‘companion’.⁷⁵

Also, in Chapter 2, I briefly introduced how descriptions of landscape located in the external world intersect with descriptions of the internal process of *samādhi*. Being ‘delightful’ and ‘charming’, such places invite not only separation from one’s usual sensorial environment, but also a therapeutic foretaste of the fruits of ascetic ardour. Physical seclusion (*kāyaviveka*) is one part of a meditative continuum together with mental seclusion (*cittaviveka*) that connects with concomitant stages of spiritual happiness. In what follows, I will discuss how the three stages of *viveka* as a meditative continuum are traced in the motif of the ‘delightful’ landscape, often with reference to the word *ramaṇīya*. I will make reference to the European literary motif of the *locus amoenus*, or ‘pleasance’ as a heuristic device to examine literal and metaphorical descriptions of *viveka* in the Pāli imaginaire.

The notion of a *locus amoenus* is thought to have originated in classical Greek poetry and, later, became part of its rhetorical tradition.⁷⁶ According to the German

⁷² S IV 194-95. Collins. *Selfless Persons*, pp. 173-4.

⁷³ Dhṛp 153-4: ‘I have wandered through many births in *samsāra* seeking but not finding the housebuilder; repeated birth is full of suffering. Housebuilder! You are seen, you will not build a house again. All your rafters are broken, your ridge-pole is shattered. My mind is beyond conditioning, and has reached the end of desire.’ Translation by Collins, *Selfless Persons*, p. 175.

⁷⁴ Collins, *Selfless Persons*, p. 171.

⁷⁵ Collins, *Selfless Persons*, p. 172.

⁷⁶ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 195.

literary critic Ernst Robert Curtius, the attractive features of the landscape including shade, trees, meadows and water form a literary ‘common place’ or *topos* illuminating a rhetorical theme of ‘ideal landscape’ across genres.⁷⁷ The *locus amoenus* or pleasance, can be identified in Homer’s idyllic gardens of Alcinous, described in terms of fertile land and running water.⁷⁸ However, much later, aspects of the pleasance in English garden poetry intersect with real places.⁷⁹ Although my analysis of the Pāli texts may illuminate interesting comparisons with depictions of the pleasance in European literature, this is only incidental in this study. I will use the pleasance to help analyse distinctive literary aspects of the *nikāyas* and to better understand their significance. I will trace how the pleasance is not just ornamental but is purposefully prefigured in the three-level *Niddesa* classification of *viveka* to show how the ‘delightful place’ figures both practically and ideationally as determinate features of landscape and in spiritually advanced and awakened minds.

One of the most celebrated descriptions of the pleasance found in Pāli Buddhist literature is the portrayal of the forest in the *Cūḷavanavaṇṇā*⁸⁰ and the *Mahāvanavaṇṇā*⁸¹ of the *Vessantara Jātaka* which portrays the landscape around Vessantara’s hermitage as a florid idyll. In her recent translation of this *jātaka* into English, Sarah Shaw devotes a great deal of detail and care to these descriptions of the forest.⁸² The audience is invited to imagine seeing, smelling and hearing a sensorial landscape filled with mountains, lotus ponds and a dense forest rich with fruit trees,⁸³ scented flora,⁸⁴ and wildlife.⁸⁵ These scenes are narrated by a solitary ascetic named Accuta, whose description, according to

⁷⁷ Curtius (trans. by Trask), *European Literature*, p. 198.

⁷⁸ Curtius (trans. by Trask), *European Literature*, p. 185.

⁷⁹ Sarah Dempster, *The Locus Amoenus: Ethically Justified Space in Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (University of Western Australia: unpublished PhD thesis, 2012).

⁸⁰ J VI 528-32.

⁸¹ J VI 532-47.

⁸² Shaw points out that in Margaret Cone’s earlier translation, the forest section mostly appears in an appendix. Collins’ study also only briefly describes the forest, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 335. Shaw rightfully restores a detailed translation of the *Mahāvanavaṇṇā* calling it ‘an ecological celebration of the diversity of the natural environment’. Naomi Appleton and Sarah Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha: The Mahānipāta of the Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* Vol I and II (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2016), p. 529.

⁸³ v.377. J VI 529; Appleton & Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories*, p. 588.

⁸⁴ v.347. J VI 530; Appleton & Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories*, p. 584.

⁸⁵ vv.411-429. J IV 538-39; Appleton & Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories*, pp. 592-3.

Shaw, betrays the value of his own solitude within the forest.⁸⁶ This landscape is a remarkable depiction of abundant and unspoilt nature and yet its therapeutic appeal and *xenia* gives the forest an important narrative function as a place that is both inviting of and sensitised by human presence. Upon entry into the forest, the trees show their ‘alarm’ (*ubbigga*) when the Bodhisatta’s children cry out with desire for their abundant fruit. The trees bend down in response to allow their fruit to be plucked.⁸⁷ The scene appears to me to be a good example of a ‘pathetic fallacy’ in Buddhist literature.⁸⁸ A ‘pathetic fallacy’ is a rhetoric device that identifies aspects of nature with human sensitivity (*páthos*) and is closely associated with English romantic poetry.⁸⁹ In this Buddhist context, the term may be better expressed as a ‘sympathetic fallacy’⁹⁰ in keeping with the overall theme of generosity — an echo of Vessantara’s own compassion. Vessantara’s forest is then one remarkable example of the pleasance in Buddhist literature.⁹¹ Even in this imaginative depiction of nature in harmony with itself, there is a clear allusion to an ascetic vision of a transformed place. As we shall explore, it is through the imagery of *viveka* in the *nikāyas* that the association between the pleasance and meditative states is found.

4.4.1 Kāyaviveka

Many of the features of the pleasance in Buddhist literature are presented individually in stock lists for *kāyaviveka*, discussed in Chapter 2, and poetically brought to life in the

⁸⁶ Appleton and Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories*, p. 531.

⁸⁷ v.223. J VI 513; Appleton & Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories*, p. 569.

⁸⁸ Another example is found in the *Nidānakathā* when the tree under which Queen Mahā Māya gives birth to Prince Siddhattha bends one of its branches down so that she could hold it. See Thomas William Rhys Davids, *Buddhist birth-stories The commentarial Introduction Entitled Nidāna-Kathā —The story of the Lineage*, revised by Caroline Augusta Rhys Davids (London: Routledge, 1942), p. 154. One might also include earthquakes at key events in the Buddha’s life as a form of nature’s ‘emotional’ response to a *buddha*’s presence in the world and *parinibbāna*, see the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, D II 108-9.

⁸⁹ First coined by the 19th Century English art critic, John Ruskin. See Meyer Howard Abrams, and Geoffrey Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 10th ed (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2011), p. 269.

⁹⁰ It is in a sense a literary conceit in that the emotions of trees are attributed to tree-deities rather than the trees themselves, e.g. at A III 370-71. Unlike the latter, the trees in this part of the *jātaka* appear to move of their own accord, stirred by their feelings towards Vessantara’s children.

⁹¹ Another long description with similar motifs is the description of Upasīva’s hermitage in the *Apadāna*. Ap 345-47.

verses of the *Theragāthā*.⁹² Nature, in its stark reality, forms a perfect mirror to the renunciate's mind, empty of all signs of home and possession. Whilst mountains and caves appear more in keeping with the *paneremos* of the Desert Fathers as the farthest locations from civilisation, it is the pleasing aspects of their coolness and shade that more often draw our attention.⁹³ Many of these features are neatly brought together in the later *Vimuttimaggā* ('Path of Freedom') as a determinate arrangement of landscape and nature:

And again, he sees the dwelling of the homeless man in the clean forest retreat where fragrant flowers bloom, where birds sing and the cry of the wild is heard. In that prosperous field which the good man cultivates, are shadows of trees, groves and water which captivate the mind of others. The ground is flat and exceedingly clean; so there is nothing uneven. Seeing this, men admire them with awe. Here are no quarrels and noises. This place where the homeless man trains for enlightenment is like the dwelling of Brahma.⁹⁴

Here, the wild beauty of the pleasance invites the body to be secluded and stilled and prepares the mind for meditation.

In the *Ariyapariyesenā-sutta*, we glimpse a pleasance that is circumscribed by both nature and civilisation. The Buddha as the Bodhisatta, having abandoned his teachers wandered alone to Uruvelā and recalls:

There I saw an agreeable piece of ground, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby, a village for alms resort. I considered: 'This is an agreeable piece of ground... This will serve for the striving of a clansman intent on striving.' And I sat down thinking: 'This will serve for striving.'⁹⁵

As we found from exploring formulae for *kāyaviveka*, similar descriptions of quiet and remote locations or dwelling places occur regularly in the *nikāyas* as part of prescriptions for meditation or as motifs.⁹⁶ They appear within stock phrases describing landscape as

⁹² Th 307, 310, 1064 (rivers and streams), Th 539, 541 (forests), Th 110, 217, 309, 1062 (trees), Th 523, 540 (flowers), Th 49, 522, 1069, (birds).

⁹³ Th 1135 and 1144.

⁹⁴ Translation by Ehara, Rev., Soma Thera and Kheminda Thera, *The Path of Freedom*, p. 206.

⁹⁵ M I 167, 1-8. Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 259.

⁹⁶ In line with the narrative emphasis of certain *nikāyas* that seek to distinguish the Buddha and his teaching from other ascetics in order to win over followers and lay support. See Chapter 2.

a ‘delightful piece of land’ (*bhūmibhāga ramaṇīya*)⁹⁷ or as ‘pleasing and delightful’ (*pāsādika ramaṇīya*) and hence particularly suitable for striving (*padhāna*).⁹⁸

The pleasance of the *Ariyapariyesenā-sutta* is bounded by a nearby village giving easy access to alms and a clear-flowing river with ‘pleasant, smooth banks’ for bathing. Whilst it is close to civilisation it is sufficiently remote for quiet practice. Some might conclude from this episode that the Bodhisatta’s previous solitary life was a failure and the pleasance is a rejection of asceticism. However, the pleasance here is perfectly in tune with a distinct middle way vision to ascetic life where both meditation and self-effort are supported. As such, the pleasance of the *Ariyapariyesenā-sutta* is quintessentially Buddhist. It is a place of solitude in which landscape foreshadows the meditative delight of a mind secluded from emotional disturbances and the body sufficiently nourished.⁹⁹ Yet how can the notion of pleasance be consistently applied if not all *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* can cope with the demands of physical withdrawal into the landscape?

4.4.2 Ārāma

The hermitage or *ārāma* as a dwelling place preserves the importance of meditative seclusion within communal settings. The institution of the *ārāma* is founded in the mutual relationship between the *bhikkhu* and the householder which has been, from the outset, the key to the success of the *Saṅgha*. A virtuous *bhikkhu* is compared to a firm banyan tree at a crossroads providing fruit and shade for various birds that come to rest there.¹⁰⁰ From elsewhere, we learn that laypeople who plant trees, parks (*ārāma*) and build eating and resting places for *bhikkhus* gain much merit.¹⁰¹ The imagery of this relationship could not be more vivid: philopatric birds devoted to their natural source of nourishment in turn encouraging those places to flourish. It is through this relationship that the notion of pleasance undergoes its first innovation.

⁹⁷ E.g. S III 109, 9-10 where the phrase is a metaphor for *nibbāna*.

⁹⁸ E.g. Ud 34, 14-15. The commentator describes the land as *pāsādika* due to its abundant (*aviraḷa*) trees with soft (*siniddha*) leaves offering dense shade (*sandacchāya*); Ud-a 217, 22-24.

⁹⁹ Note also that the Theravāda tradition places the episode at M I 167, quoted above, in the Buddha’s hagiography prior to his recollection of the experience of first *jhāna* as a young boy in the seclusion of a rose-apple tree which triggers the Bodhisatta’s middle-way approach to asceticism. See Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *Life of the Buddha: According to the Pali Canon* (Onalask: BPS Pariyatti, 2001), pp. 14-21.

¹⁰⁰ A III 43, 4-7.

¹⁰¹ S I 33, 18-21.

The term *ārāma* is derived from $\bar{a} + \sqrt{ram}$ standing for pleasure or delight. As cultivated land, *ārāma* is a ‘place of pleasure’, ‘garden’ or ‘park’.¹⁰² The *Udāna* commentary pays special attention to the beauty of the flowers and fruit to be found there and a place where *bhikkhus* who travel from afar can take delight (*abhiramanti*).¹⁰³ The idealised *ārāma* being described by the commentator is the park of the lay follower Anāthapiṇḍika in Jeta’s Wood where the Buddha often resided.¹⁰⁴ Shimada argues that gardens and monasteries had parallel but different functions as peripheral settings and that gardens were ideal spaces for accommodating the *Saṅgha* into urban settings.¹⁰⁵ Whilst Shimada’s claim that monasteries would have occupied liminal spaces is not disputed, it seems problematic to regard them as simply ‘urban’. This is because the Buddha’s initial response to Anāthapiṇḍika was to highlight the importance of meditative quiet in ‘empty places’ (*suññāgāre*).¹⁰⁶ The term *suññāgāra* has both a literal and figurative meaning. Whilst it primarily means a place devoid of people,¹⁰⁷ like other terminology explored in Chapter 2, it is played on in a figurative sense as the attainment of a transformed mental state absent of the hindrances.¹⁰⁸ It therefore seems that the *ārāma* maintains two practical ideals: firstly, individual meditation practice in a group setting and, secondly, the interdependence between monastics and wider society mentioned above.

Although the *ārāma* maintains separate practice within the community as an institution,¹⁰⁹ it still seems to conflict with physical seclusion in the forest which, I have argued, appears in certain texts to be prescribed to all *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*.

¹⁰² CPD, s.v. *ārāma*.

¹⁰³ Ud-a 56¹⁴⁻¹⁷.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 1 for a description of the *ārāma* donated by Anāthapiṇḍika.

¹⁰⁵ Shimada, *Garden Imagery*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁶ ‘*Tathāgatas* delight in empty places’, Vin II 158, 11-12.

¹⁰⁷ As in what I call the *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula for *kāyaviveka* discussed in Chapter 2. D II 291, 3-5: *araññagato vā rukkhamaḷagato vā suññāgāragato vā nisīdati pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā ujum kāyaṃ paṇidhāya parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā*.

¹⁰⁸ ‘The state of an unsurpassed human is called meditative-absorption, freedom, concentration, attainment, knowledge-and-vision, path development, realisation of fruition, abandonment of defilements afflictions, being free from the hindrances, **the mind’s delight in empty places**.’ My translation of Vin III 91,31-33: *uttarimanussadhammo nāma jhānaṃ vimokkhaṃ samādhi samāpatti nānadassanaṃ maggabhāvanā phalacchikiriyā kilesapahānaṃ vinīvaraṇatā cīttassa suññāgāre abhirati*.

¹⁰⁹ The Buddha is said to have sanctioned other *ārāmas* at Vin I 39, 22: *anujānāmi bhikkhave ārāman ti*. E.g. at the Bamboo Grove, (Veḷuvana) near the city of Rājagaha.

Nevertheless, withdrawal into the wider reaches of the landscape is not altogether forgotten and perhaps even encouraged for those dwelling in *ārāmas*. This is firstly, because a commentarial passage acknowledges that monastics will wander away from the *ārāma* even though those who do will easily be drawn back ‘inside’ (*abbhantaram*) causing their delight.¹¹⁰ Secondly, the texts recognise that it is not only the donation of an *ārāma* that is praised. Constructing a bridge (*setū*), a causeway (*saṅkamana*)¹¹¹ or cultivating a woodland (*vana*) are similarly lauded.¹¹² All this, I suggest, makes the *ārāma* less of an urban setting and more a residence that supports ‘inner’ meditative work. The ‘delight’ of the *ārāma* is, therefore, consonant with that of far reaches of remote landscape more clearly associated with those attained in spiritual life.

4.4.3 Cittaviveka

From the verses of the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*, we can notice that the pleasance is no longer restricted to a determinate geographic landscape. The vistas of those attained in concentration speak of a transformation in the psycho-ethical relationship to place where limiting factors are transcended. We might conceive of the *Bhayabherava-sutta* as the *locus classicus* of such a transformation. The Bodhisatta’s fear of meditating alone in the forest depths is later followed by ‘great relief’ (*bhiyya palloma*) by dint of his mindfulness and concentration.¹¹³ In other passages, the meditative transformation is narrated through conflicting emotions to the same landscape. A *devatā*’s fear of the wind roaring through the depths of the forest is contrasted to a meditating *bhikkhu*’s delight (*rati*) in it.¹¹⁴ From elsewhere, despite the sweet appeal of birdsong, the delight that

¹¹⁰ The commentary to the *Thera Sutta* at Ud 3-4, Ud-a 56, 17-18.

¹¹¹ S I 33, 18 and S I 100, 13.

¹¹² According to the *Sāratthappakāsinī*, a woodland (*vana*) comprises bounded groups of uncultivated groves (*aropimavana*); Spk I 88, 23-27.

¹¹³ Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi translate *palloma* as ‘solace’ (*Middle Length Discourses*, p.103). I. B. Horner translates it as ‘assurance’ (*The Middle Length Sayings* Vol. I, p. 23). The term *palloma* is discussed by R. Morris who identifies it (amongst other explanations) as a contraction of *pannaloma*. The term *pannaloma* is used in commentary to explain *lomaṃ pātenti*; literally, ‘they caused hair to fall’. *Pannaloma* may, as such, be understood in the opposite sense to *haṭṭhaloma*; ‘hair standing on end’ as in horripilation. Hence my translation of *palloma* as ‘relief’ serves to interpret the Bodhisatta’s transformation from fear as both therapeutic as well as epistemic. ‘Notes and Queries’, in *Journal of the Pāli Text Society*, ed. by T.W Rhys Davids (London: PTS, 1889), pp, 200-12 (p. 206). See also Th 189-90.

¹¹⁴ S I 7, 1-5.

matters is in a concentrated mind.¹¹⁵ The whole of the *Bhikkhunisaṃyutta*¹¹⁶ is dedicated to separate stories of Māra’s harassment of nuns dwelling alone in the Blind Person’s Grove (Andhavana) and their defeat of ‘him’. From these motifs of meditative calm, remote places are still ‘delightful’ or ‘pleasing’. Calm is not just the absence of fear, but also accompanied by an inner delight.

The various vivid descriptions of the pleasance suggest a more refined experience of the world. In the realm of pure form (*rūpāvacara*), experience of the outer ‘world’ is increasingly in tune with the translucence, colour, softness, and subtlety of ‘inner’ meditative signs (*nimittas*).¹¹⁷ In the *Theragāthā*, we hear how the rain is no different to a garland of flowers when inner joy is present of the mind attained to *jhāna*.¹¹⁸ The flowering woods appear like clouds, and the mountains like cotton down.¹¹⁹ Amongst the rocky crags are delightful large stones covered by clear water and moss.¹²⁰ The commentator to the *Theragāthā* explains that the water is ‘fine’ and ‘subtle’¹²¹ and goes on to explain how this pleasant spot invites meditation:

‘Having large stones’ means that among these [rocks] are wide stones that are broad and soft and pleasing to touch; by this he indicates the excellence of the place for meditating.¹²²

Classic examples of the pleasance in the mind of those advanced in meditative concentration can be found in the description of inner joy (*pīti*) and happiness (*sukha*) of the second *jhāna* where the mind is wholly ‘at one’ with the meditation object:

It is as if there were a pool where water sprang up... Now when the cool waters sprang up in that pool they would suffuse, fill, soak, and drench that same pool with cool water, so that no part of that pool

¹¹⁵ Th 49.

¹¹⁶ S I 128-135.

¹¹⁷ Buddhaghosa explains that the subtle experience of *nimittas* vary between meditators due to a difference in perception (*saññā*). Thus, whilst some might describe a *nimitta* arising from concentration on breathing as a ‘star’, others describe ‘smoke’ or a ‘cloud’, *Vism* 6-26.

¹¹⁸ Th 523-24.

¹¹⁹ Th 1137.

¹²⁰ Th 113:

*acchodikā puthusilā gonaṅgulamigāyutā
ambusevālasañchannā te selā ramayanti man ti.*

¹²¹ Th-a I 284 (Be): *acchodikā ti acchaṃ abahalaṃ sukhumaṃ udakaṃ etesū ti.*

¹²² My translation of Th-a I 284 (Be) *puṭhū ti puṭhulā vitthatā mudusukhasamphassā silā etesū ti puthusilā. etena nisajjanaṭṭhānasampattim dasseti.*

would be untouched by the cool water.¹²³

Third *jhāna*, where there is only *sukha* accompanied by equanimity and mindfulness, is described as a pond full of coloured lotuses suffused by cool water.¹²⁴ To this image, Buddhaghosa adds that *sukha* is like the experience of the shade and water of a wood with a cool pond for a man wandering in the desert.¹²⁵

From the verses and stories of the *Theras* there is clearly a shift in the notion of the pleasance as a determinate place in the landscape towards a figure of meditative practice and attainment. However, the imagery of the pleasance is not purely constrained to tranquillity. Other verses also speak of wisdom. The cool scented breeze on a mountain helps overcome ignorance.¹²⁶ In the *Therīgāthā*, the sight of an elephant and its trainer from atop a mountain reminds Dantikā how solitude helps her to train her mind.¹²⁷ Seated on top of a mountain with its cooling breeze and with her upper robe cast aside, Mettikā's mind is freed (*vimutti*).¹²⁸ Khemā's¹²⁹ infatuation with her own beauty and subsequent stream-entry is narrated in her journey through the Bamboo Grove at Rājgaha.¹³⁰ Khemā is greeted by the sounds of bees, cuckoos and peacocks and the sight of a young *bhikkhu* meditating at the root of a tree.¹³¹ The charming (*ramma*) wood is contrasted with sensory pleasure that is 'the delight of fools'¹³² seen through insight into impermanence — the 'un-lovely' (*asubha*) aspects of the body.

Pleasance, conceived through *cittaviveka*, is in this way firmly placed in the mind rather than determinate places in the landscape, first described in terms of *kāyaviveka*. However, it is usually a transformative encounter in the landscape that seems to be emphasised throughout the examples presented. Despite the emphasis on the cultivation of wholesome mental states, the transformation that is experienced is one narrated

¹²³ D I 73, 20-29. Translation by Gethin, *Sayings of the Buddha*, p. 29.

¹²⁴ D I 74, 14-21.

¹²⁵ Vism 145, 8-10.

¹²⁶ Th 544.

¹²⁷ Thī 48-50.

¹²⁸ Thī 29-30.

¹²⁹ Among all *bhikkhunīs*, Khemā is described as 'foremost in great wisdom', A I 25, 19.

¹³⁰ Thī-a 126-36 cf. Ap 543-51.

¹³¹ Thī-a 132, 11-15.

¹³² Thī-a 133, 21; *bālānaṃ abhinanditaṃ*. Khemā sees the Buddha being fanned by a young woman whose beauty quickly fades as she grows old and falls to the ground.

through *kāyaviveka*. As we will see now, physical solitude is retained even at the ‘end’ of the path in images of the pleasance as *nibbāna*.

4.4.4 Upādhiviveka

We have already encountered how *viveka* represents a process. As well as seclusion of mind and body, *viveka* also involves successive levels of simplification and unification.¹³³ *Viveka* is continuous with progressive stages of spiritual fulfilment along the path that are compared to ‘fruit’ of increasing perfection.¹³⁴ Elsewhere, stages of ascetic purification are compared to penetrations of the bark, heartwood and core of a tree¹³⁵ whilst each of the attainments in *samādhi* are likewise considered a more sublime dwelling than the previous one.¹³⁶ In the same way, the imagery of the pleasance as *nibbāna* can be considered as the culmination of a single path leading one way and progressively towards the end of all suffering.

In the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*¹³⁷ of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the five different rebirth destinations and *nibbāna* are compared using different parables. One who is destined for arahantship is like a person parched by the heat going along a one-way path (*ekāyana magga*)¹³⁸ that leads only to a delightful pond with smooth banks and clear water lying near a dense wood. They would come to this pond and having plunged in (*ogāhitvā*) bathed, drunk and relieved all their fatigue and distress, sit or lie down in that forest-thicket and experience only pleasant feelings.¹³⁹ In this parable, the pleasance contrasts the imagery of *nibbāna* with *saṃsāra*; stillness (lying or sitting) versus travelling and coolness versus heat. It could also be said that the pleasance as *nibbāna* imagery evokes the metaphor ‘knowing is contact’ at the ultimate stage of meditative life where personal liberation and happiness are imagined through plunging into a pond and drinking water.

The path is ‘single’ in that it is walked alone and leads one way and to one destination where awakening knowledge is inevitable, just as it is inevitable for a parched, tired and thirsty traveller to plunge into a clean and clear pool and savour it. In

¹³³ See Chapter 2. One who is attained ‘to the pith’ is compared to the foremost kind of rice which has been refined and purified, A I 241-42.

¹³⁴ D I 61-85.

¹³⁵ D III 50-52.

¹³⁶ A V 207-09.

¹³⁷ M I 68-83.

¹³⁸ M I 75, 1.

¹³⁹ M I 76-7.

this romanticised image of the forest, the pleasance has its most complete and lasting literary monument in the Pāli imaginaire as an individual attainment and experience. Yet as we shall see, the imaginary silence of *nibbāna* as pleasance is not limited to natural landscape and also finds expression in a more paradoxical image of a city.

Narratively, the forest and other parts of secluded landscape are typically the places where awakening happens.¹⁴⁰ However, features of the pleasance as natural landscape such as trees, shade and cool water are not the only the images of *nibbāna*. Even though not explicitly saying so, a passage from the *Samyutta Nikāya* presents *nibbāna*, somewhat paradoxically, as an ancient royal city (*nagara*) in which aspects of the pleasance, albeit as cultivated land, are preserved:

(It is) just as if a person, wandering through the jungle forest, were to see an ancient road, an old straight path travelled by men of former times, and were to go along it; (and) as he went along he were to see an ancient town, an old royal city inhabited by men of former times, with parks, groves, ponds and walls - (a) delightful (place).¹⁴¹ [The man sends news of his find to the king, suggesting that he rebuild the city.] And (then) the king or king's minister were to rebuild the city; and after some time that city were to thrive and increase, become rich, prosperous, and crowded with people.¹⁴²

As Collins explained, the image of a 'city' conflicts directly with *nibbāna* as the highest form of 'leaving home for homelessness'. 'Household life' is placed in no uncertain terms as a path to avoid. The city (or town or even village for that matter) clearly contradicts the renunciate ideal. Not strictly a canonical image, references to 'the city of *nibbāna*', nevertheless appear in later canonical and non-canonical material.¹⁴³

Even if the 'city of *nibbāna*' is in tension with renunciatory ideals, references to imagery from other passages suggest otherwise. The 'city of *nibbāna*' is lost and only to be found after travelling a 'straight' path. The image is consonant with how the path is, elsewhere, conceived as 'narrow' and leading only one way. The path described, is in no

¹⁴⁰ There are exceptions to this. For instance, Bāhiya, who is initially alone in the forest, thinks he is an *arahant* but a *devatā* corrects him. So, he forsakes the forest to seek out the Buddha in the city of Sāvatti where he is enlightened by a teaching, Ud 6-9.

¹⁴¹ *Ramaṇīya*.

¹⁴² S II 105-6. Translation by Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 224-5.

¹⁴³ Such as the *Apadāna* and *Milindapañha* respectively. A reference is also made in an 'allegedly non-canonical' text which will be discussed later. *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 224-29.

doubt, one that leads away from home and a deconstruction of what supports ordinary household life. The path is travelled along uncultivated land and the ‘city’ is found in the depths of the forest. Finding something that is already there but concealed is reminiscent of mental cultivation and experiencing the mind’s naturally radiant depths free of all its defilements.¹⁴⁴ Meditation is also implied by the call to ‘build that city’ which blends neatly with another canonical image in which the four *jhānas* are compared to provisions that help fortify and protect a frontier city (*nagara*).¹⁴⁵

Connections between cities and renouncers are alluded to elsewhere. The motif of renouncing kings includes *cakkavattins* for whom (re)building cities and renouncing them for the benefit of the masses are contiguous events in their lives. This motif appears in the case of King Saṅkha in the *Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta*¹⁴⁶ but more vividly in the *Mahāśudassana-sutta*.¹⁴⁷ The latter includes a story of the Buddha’s former birth as a *cakkavattin* called Mahāśudassana who lived in a lavish and prosperous city. The pleasure aspects are narrated from the perspective of Mahāśudassana’s acts of generosity and morality in the precincts of his magnificent city where everyone prospers and, from the calm and delight that the city brings to its inhabitants. The city is described as enticing, sensuous and intoxicating (*rajanīyo ca kamanīyo ca madanīyo ca*) and the city’s trees help to soothe desire.¹⁴⁸ After the story narrates *sīla* and *dāna*, the focus moves to *bhāvana*. Mahāśudassana withdraws into the inner chambers of his ‘*Dhamma* palace’, where the Queen and her retinue are kept from entering.¹⁴⁹ In his private quarters, Mahāśudassana practices *jhāna* and the *brahmāvihāras* and is clearly physically

¹⁴⁴ A I 10, 10-15.

¹⁴⁵ A IV 111-13. The provisions are 1. grass, firewood and water, 2. rice and barley, 3. foodstuff and 4. medications.

¹⁴⁶ D III 76-77.

¹⁴⁷ D II 168-99. Rupert Gettin shows how the *sutta* is closely associated with the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* but should be treated as an important standalone *sutta*. See ‘Mythology as Meditation: From the Mahāśudassana Sutta to the Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtra’, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 28, (2006), 63-112.

¹⁴⁸ D II 185.

¹⁴⁹ D II 186. Here stopping the queen entering the palace evokes abandoning sense desire.

separated¹⁵⁰ from others.¹⁵¹ The imagery supporting Mahāsudassana’s rewards for his meditative withdrawal is supported in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*. Here, someone destined for a heavenly rebirth is compared to a weary man travelling along a path who comes to occupy, by sitting or lying down, a luxuriously furnished upper chamber of a mansion that is shut off and secured by bars.¹⁵²

I have used the idea of the pleasance or *locus amoenus* as a tool to analyse motifs of delightful landscape and their connection to the Buddhist path and goal. In these descriptions, nature can be seen to be in harmony with itself, but there is clearly an allusion to withdrawal and its therapeutic and spiritual significance. The pleasance is used to narrate a psycho-ethical transformation in the relationship to places preserved in idealised descriptions of monastic settings and in the challenging far reaches of landscape. I have mentioned two contrasting images of *nibbāna* which tend to romanticise the forest. Firstly, the forest as pleasance straightforwardly appears to idealise the bliss of personal liberation. When *nibbāna* is likened to a ‘city’, I suggest that two themes can be discerned. Firstly, as a path image, the city need not be in tension with moving away from household life. The city, its fortifications and its most cloistered parts speak of seclusion and meditation. The city is something hidden only to be discovered individually in the forest. In this view, the forest is an alternative city for renunciators. Secondly, as a goal image, the city is evocative of the Buddha’s rediscovery of *Dhamma* so that his followers may realise it (rebuild it) for themselves. The pleasance features of the ‘city of *nibbāna*’ are consonant with the individual happiness of meditation but also the benefit that personal liberation brings to society as a whole. It is also important to note how, from within the *nikāyas* as a single genre of Pāli literature, idealised images of solitude contrast with those described in Chapter 2 that prescribe solitary practice through straightforward descriptions of places to meditate.

¹⁵⁰ Gethin notes that in the Central Asian/Gilgit version of the story — the *Mahāsudarśana Sutra* — the palace is built outside of the city, highlighting physical withdrawal away from the crowd more clearly. See *Mythology as Meditation*, p. 75.

¹⁵¹ Some parallels can be detected in the *Janaka Jātaka*. After King Janaka renounces, he immediately retreats alone to the roof terrace of his palace. See Appleton and Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories*, p. 100.

¹⁵² M I 76, 5-18. The imagery of a personal mansion for those destined for heavenly births is also suggestive of the *vimāna* (figuratively, the ‘immeasurable’ as in heavenly) as a reward for good deeds. See the *Vimāna-vatthu*. ‘Stories of the Mansions’, in I.B. Horner and H.S. Gehman, *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon Part IV* (London: PTS, 1974).

In sum, what I hope I have demonstrated is how it is insufficient to conceive idealised depictions of landscape as purely ornamental. What I suggest is that they imaginatively give voice to both literal and figurative dimensions of one aspect of the path which values physical seclusion and, therefore, also have a practical orientation. The attractive and simpler features of landscape can be considered in terms of a skilful desire for spiritual growth and the practice of mental cultivation. As such, all *bhikkhus/bhikkhunīs* are reminded of meditation as their common purpose. Yet as discussed earlier, nature is not always positive. So how does Pāli literature make use of and distinguish between positive and negative descriptions of nature within this purpose? As I will now attempt to show, negative imagery of nature and landscape also has a purposeful role to play in the literary imaginaire of the path ‘to the city’ of *nibbāna*.

4.5 Landscape as path imagery

It is difficult to characterise the use of figurative language in Pāli texts in terms of precise analogical relationships. Instead, imagery recurs with a general familiarity but, as we have seen with regard to the ‘city’, paradoxes occur. The well-known metaphor ‘craving is thirst’ links greed with an unquenchable desire and a cause of suffering.¹⁵³ However, the experience of arahantship is likened to replenishing oneself with water. In the same passage from the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*, a tree stands for seclusion in its most perfected sense and, elsewhere, a tree represents virtue.¹⁵⁴ Elsewhere, a bare tree, as a metaphor for renunciation is compared to a fully fruiting one.¹⁵⁵ Yet, by contrast, a tree imagined by its constituent parts is often conceived in terms of self or samsāric experience. The trunk of a banana tree lacks substance and is empty like the *sankhāras* and the other *khandhas*¹⁵⁶ whilst, elsewhere, the hindrances are like trees that encircle and overpower other trees.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, p. 70.

¹⁵⁴ At A V 4-5 a person endowed with moral conduct (*sīlavato*) is like a healthy tree grown to its fullness.

¹⁵⁵ *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, J VI 45, 3-4. The paradox of ‘less is more’ may be explained in the sense that the bare tree arousing a sense of urgency to renounce is not something that occurs to any ordinary mind. For a more recent translation of this *jātaka*, see Appleton and Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories*, pp. 86-116.

¹⁵⁶ S III 141.

¹⁵⁷ S V 96-97.

The penetrating and wild nature of plant life is evoked as aspects of *dukkha* or its origin and it is easy to see why. Desire, as a ‘thorn’ (*kaṇṭaka*), vividly connects mental pain with physical discomfort.¹⁵⁸ Bhikkhu Khantipālo writes on how immense creepers deep in the jungle have the tendency to drape other vegetation and distort their true appearance — just as one’s view of the world may be distorted by craving.¹⁵⁹ Gardeners will be familiar with the hardness of bamboo, and in the imaginaire of Pāli texts they are a metaphor for attachment to household life.¹⁶⁰ The commentator explains that bamboo grows thick and fast just as a householder’s wealth and family increase.¹⁶¹ Even the woodlands (*vana*), which are generally associated with seclusion, take a negative twist as craving since the woods represent a place of inexhaustible growth.¹⁶² The term *gahana* as ‘thicket’ speaks vividly of how certain views are an expression of grasping that distorts the true nature of self.¹⁶³ The nature of craving is to ensnare the mind. So, one who is enamoured by praise and attention is like a goat who is trapped by a ‘thorny thicket’ (*kaṇṭakagahana*).¹⁶⁴

However, the imagery of *gahana* is evoked elsewhere to show the link between withdrawal and meditative effort and is clearly a positive path image. For example, *rukhamūlagahana* (‘woodland thicket’) can literally be the ‘root of a tree deep in the woods’ where one sits to meditate.¹⁶⁵ The commentary explains that it is by virtue of its ‘tangled condition’ (*gahanaggahaṇena*) that *rukhamūlagahana* is suitable for mental

¹⁵⁸ Ud 27, 17. ‘He for whom there is conquered the thorn of sense desire...’ Translation by Masefield, *The Udāna*, p. 47.

¹⁵⁹ Bhikkhu Khantipālo, *Forest Meditations; The Verses of the Arahant Tālapuṭa Thera* (Kandy: BPS, 2009), p. 13. At Th 1094, craving is like a creeper to be cut by the ‘sword of wisdom’.

¹⁶⁰ Th 72.

¹⁶¹ Th-a I 172, 7-11: *bhariyāyānītāyā ti yathā vaṃso vaḍḍhitaggo vaṃsantaresu saṃsaṭṭha sākāpasākho veḷugumbato dunnīharaṇīyo hoti, evaṃ aham pi bhariyāya mayhaṃ ānītāya puttadhītādivasena vaḍḍhitaggo āsattivasena gharāvāsato dunnīharaṇīyo bhavēyyaṃ.*

¹⁶² Pj I 24: ‘The word *vana* is a designation for craving; for that is called “desire” in a sense of and longing for its objective domains and resorting to them. *Vanatha* is said with reference to that which extends desire though obsession by it; this is a designation for the latent tendency of craving.’ *taṇhā y’etaṃ adhvacaṇaṃ sā hi visayānaṃ patthanato sevanato ca vanan ti vuccati. taṃ pariyuṭṭhānavasena vanaṃ tharati tanoṭi ti vanatho, taṇhānusayassettaṃ adhvacaṇaṃ.* Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p. 379.

¹⁶³ M I 8, 27.

¹⁶⁴ S II 228, 7.

¹⁶⁵ S I 199, 32 = Th 119. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p. 296.

development and effort (*bhāvanāyogyataṃ*).¹⁶⁶ This is because as well as the absence of the crowd (*parisā*), the meditator is protected from the elements. Significantly, again, is how the commentaries interpret forest practice in a positive light that is consistent with the *nikāya* view.

Being derived from the root verb $\sqrt{gāh}$, as in the verb, *ajjhogāhati* ('he plunges'), *rukkhamūlagahana* seems to align with the 'knowing is contact' metaphor that I introduced earlier. In this case, it is more in line with 'seizing or immersing in' the forest depths and where *gahana* implies 'apprehending'¹⁶⁷ as in meditative knowledge. The meditator is physically rooted in the depths (*-mūlagahana*), concealed and protected by the forest in seclusion. Hence, both unwholesome and wholesome expressions of desire, namely, grasping at sense objects or views and resorting to seclusion respectively, appear to evoke the imagery of nature.

Elsewhere, conflicting landscape imagery is evoked to make the fundamental point that abandoning the unwholesome is accompanied by allowing the wholesome to flourish. For example, a *sāla* tree park that is overgrown with wild saplings should be cleaned up and left to grow unencumbered by cutting away the choking weeds, just as one who seeks to increase *Dhamma* by cultivating wholesome states abandons the unwholesome.¹⁶⁸ Similar path imagery is found in a verse from the *Maggavagga* of the *Dhammapada* which states:

Cut away the forest, not a tree.
From the forest fear is born.
Having cut down the forest and its growth,
Nibbāna is attained, oh monks.¹⁶⁹

As we now shall see, these important path aspects gain traction from passages that are interconnected by imagery related to the 'taming' of the forest as wild nature that obstructs the 'hidden' city of *nibbāna*.

¹⁶⁶ Th-a I 247, 1-5; *tesu rukkkhamūlaggahaṇena thānassa chāyāsampannatāya vātātapaparissayābhāvaṃ dasseti. gahanaggahaṇena nivātabhāvena vātaparissayābhāvaṃ janasambādhābhāvañ ca dasseti; tad ubhayena ca bhāvanānuyogyataṃ.*

¹⁶⁷ DOP s.v. *gahana*.

¹⁶⁸ M I 124-5.

¹⁶⁹ My translation of Dh 283:
*vanam chindatha, mā rukkkham
vanato jāyatī bhayam
chetvā vanam vanathañ ca
nibbanā hotha bhikkhavo.*

In the image of ‘*nibbāna* as a city’, the goal is expressed in its complete and fullest sense as a radically transformed pleasance no longer determined by natural landscape. Nevertheless, couched in the image is also the idea of the path seen in terms of a complete ‘taming’ of wild landscape. From Charles Hallisey’s¹⁷⁰ analysis and translation of an ostensibly non-canonical Pāli text called the *Nibbāna-sutta*,¹⁷¹ the Noble Eightfold Path is compared to a road towards a great adorned city. Covering that road stands a ‘dreadful great tree’ of defilements. This tree is described in the most negative terms. To view the city, the tree is cut down with the ‘axe of knowledge’ sharpened by concentration and virtue.¹⁷² With the tree completely overcome, the city of *nibbāna* is clearly seen. The *sutta* has similarities with another later passage found in the *Milindapañha* which compares the cultivation of moral conduct to natural land being cleared of its trees and growth in order to level the ground for a vast city.¹⁷³ Although the imagery of clearing a forest to make way for a city is missing in canonical passages, the non-canonical *Nibbāna-sutta* connects both key imagery found in the *Samyutta Nikāya* that describes the discovery of a lost city in the forest, as well as other canonical passages that evoke the imagery of ‘taming’ of the forest as wild nature to describe the abandoning of unwholesome aspects of the mind.

It seems to me that the imagery of ‘taming’ of the forest to bring the path to fulfilment complements the city as *nibbāna* and a complete image of both path and goal. Hallisey highlights a further canonical passage that depicts the body as a stump of a tree and *kamma* is like the shadow of that tree.¹⁷⁴ To remove the shadow, the tree is first cut down, split into pieces, dried and burnt. Finally, its ashes are set adrift on a river.¹⁷⁵ Hallisey’s translation of the commentary of this passage describes the tree’s removal in precise terms relating to mental cultivation and spiritual exertion. For example, destroying ignorance is like digging up the roots of the tree with a spade. Crucial stages

¹⁷⁰ Charles Hallisey, ‘Nibbānasutta: An Allegedly Non-Canonical Sutta on Nibbāna as a Great City’, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 18 (1993), 97-130.

¹⁷¹ The provenance of this *sutta* is unclear. Hallisey posits it as an example of a text that gathers and condenses canonical and commentarial material that could have been circulated both individually and as part of anthologies. But at the time of writing, Hallisey admits that little is known about its authenticity. *Nibbānasutta*, pp. 99-101.

¹⁷² Hallisey, *Nibbānasutta*, p. 127.

¹⁷³ *Mil* 34, 1-8.

¹⁷⁴ *A II* 198-99.

¹⁷⁵ cf *S II* 87-88, which compares the conditioned arising of craving to a tree in full growth. The cessation of craving is compared to the removal of the tree in a similar way.

of insight into the influence of sense perception and the physical elements evoke sensorimotor imagery of breaking up and chopping.¹⁷⁶ Decisively, the lasting cessation of the five *khandhas* is compared to the scattering of roots into the wind or casting them down a river. The imagery related above appears to be consonant with an articulation of path fulfilment — a complete cultivation of the ground to accommodate the city of *nibbāna* as the goal *in toto*. Moreover, path fulfilment is conceived in terms of sensorimotor experience of concrete domains related to landscape.

Aspects of plant life, especially as growth, make vivid metaphors for suffering and its causes. It is reasonable to see how such imagery have steered discussions about the value of nature in Buddhist thought. Even so, as a practical teaching, the Pāli Canon compels and transforms, not in spite of, but because of its paradoxes in landscape imagery. Some landscapes are reserved in the Pāli imaginaire to be wholly saṃsāric and so, to be escaped from. Nevertheless, landscape and plants are also evoked as path psychology. As a straightforwardly negative image, the growing parts of plants evoke craving, but a creeper can also be magically wish-fulfilling.¹⁷⁷ Dense forest is compared to the concealing nature of ignorance and yet, trees and thickets are often associated with seclusion. Physical withdrawal appears to be foregrounded by sensorimotor imagery related to the experience of entering and meditating in the forest. The source domain imagery of ‘movement’, ‘touching’, ‘seeing’, ‘tasting’ and ‘immersing’ in the forest depths express more abstract concepts pertaining to meditative attainment and wisdom. Embodied source domain imagery of ‘taming’ wild nature, or de-cultivation is also closely associated with the destruction of mental defilements. I have highlighted passages where I suggest abstract notions of attaining the fruits of spiritual life are reinforced by the imagery of immersion in the viscera of concrete domains. Wholesome action from spiritual exercise is evoked by imagery of the complete and decisive transformation of the forest. This process is fulfilled in the sense that one can only accommodate something as vast and glorious as the city of *nibbāna* by a complete purification of its basis.

¹⁷⁶ ‘Seeing the influence of sensory elements is like...breaking up (the whole tree piece by piece...seeing the influence of physical elements is like...splintering the tree...the burning of kilesas with knowledge is like the burining (the pieces) with fire... Hallisey. *Nibbānasutta*, p. 103.

¹⁷⁷ *kappalatā*, see DOP s.v. *kappa*.

4.6 Practical psychology

Positive and negative evaluations of nature imagery in Pāli texts in past discussions have tended to be the focus of Buddhist environmental debates. Yet the ethical concern of the Pāli *nikāyas* is a general one — not one aimed at the environment. This point is summed up neatly in the following story.

In the past, a King called Koravya had a great Banyan tree whose branches were so vast and its fruit so plentiful, that no one in his kingdom had to fight over fruit and no one had to guard it. But one day, a man cut off a branch and ate as much fruit as he wanted. Upset by this, the tree's deity (*devatā*) refused to yield any more fruit from the tree. So, the god Sakka uprooted the tree with a thunderstorm offending the tree-deity even further. 'Were you not following the duty of a tree (*rukhadhamma*)?', Sakka asked the tree-deity. Not knowing what this was, the tree-deity is then told that it is a tree's duty to allow people to take its roots, bark, leaves, flowers and fruit without getting upset. When the tree-deity agrees to follow his duty, Sakka restores the tree.¹⁷⁸

The story is told by the Buddha to a particular rude and insulting *bhikkhu* who is subsequently banished (*pabbājita*) by laypeople and fellow monastics alike. Just as it is the tree-deity's duty to bear fruit without getting offended, it is an ascetic's duty (*samañadhamma*) to interact with others kindly and patiently otherwise he is condemned to be rejected from his community.¹⁷⁹ Whilst this story might appeal to those who argue that nature is to be cultivated, according to the *nikāyas*, it also narrates how the actions of humans towards nature are not without effect. My point is to question whether such passages are best comprehended as statements about whether the relationship between humans and nature is anthropocentric or biocentric. Clearly, the story functions to remind ordinary *bhikkhus/bhikkhunīs* about fundamental virtues and the consequences of their actions.

Discussions about environmental ethics have led to some differing opinions on the role of imagery in the Pāli *nikāyas*. On one hand, Harris argued that the forest can be conceived mainly as a metaphor for impermanence whilst in reality it is 'empty and

¹⁷⁸ A III 369-71.

¹⁷⁹ A III 371, 11-15. Being rejected by the community for inappropriate and rude behaviour can be construed as another example of 'wrong solitude'.

substantial'.¹⁸⁰ As such, the value of the forest is limited in scope as part of an internal visualisation instead of a place of separation and immersion. On the other hand, Sahni argues that Buddhist environmental ethics is rooted in its general ethical teaching.¹⁸¹ He goes further when he talks about how deep places in the landscape are in a sense 'sacred'.¹⁸² Although I think it would be difficult to justify nature as sacred in this way, I am in sympathy with the notion of the forest as being singled out as a place for ascetic endeavour in the Pāli Canon. I suggest that such a conception is supported by the image of the 'city of nirvana' as a magnificent place lost in the forest. The forest appears as a city for the attained in renunciate life. In this way, the forest could be regarded as a *temenos*¹⁸³ — an ascribed part of landscape that is afforded special status — not in the sense of being numinous,¹⁸⁴ but an important symbol for what is at once the path and the goal. Furthermore, I have argued that the metaphor 'knowing is contact' speaks of the embodied practice of meditation in the forest and underscores the value of landscape as real places to be inhabited in the quest for spiritual knowledge.

Some may argue that the reason for the prevalence of imagery in the Pāli Canon is more pragmatic in that they function as part of the social and collective memorisation and transmission of teachings. Collins used imagery as a bridge between Buddhist systematic thought and narrative thought and argued that they not only function in individual psychology but 'are better taken as modes of tradition, forms of collective memory.'¹⁸⁵ For example, Collins suggested that some of the imagery in the description of the 'city of *nibbāna*' could be seen as an efficacious way of memorising lists of doctrinal items.¹⁸⁶ I have also made reference to the imagery of meditation in terms of conceptual metaphors and how they reference the embodied experience of concrete

¹⁸⁰ Harris cited Buddhaghosa's commentarial instruction on the contemplation of the falling leaves in the forest as a reflection on impermanence. *How Environmentalist is Buddhism*, p. 108. See also Chapter 2 on Harris' comment about the *Cūlasuññatā-sutta*.

¹⁸¹ Sahni, *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism*, p. 165.

¹⁸² Sahni cites the *Mahāgosiṅga Sutta* where the forest is illuminated by a forest dwelling monk. *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism*, p. 52.

¹⁸³ Τεμένην i.e. places specially dedicated for worship or deemed to be themselves numinous.

¹⁸⁴ I refer to 'numinous' in the sense of being conceived as a 'Thin Place' — a concept rooted in Celtic mysticism where the veil between heaven and earth collapses. Such a label might resonate with some Buddhist narratives of solitude and the presence of *devatās*, *māras* etc. But I am not suggesting that the forest is 'sacred' because it is where such ones often appear, rather because it is a place of spiritual growth.

¹⁸⁵ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 284 and p. 564.

¹⁸⁶ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 228.

domains. Some theoretical linguists and psychologists have argued that this is precisely why they function as memory aids.¹⁸⁷

However, complexities in the use of meditation imagery in the *nikāyas* suggest that they cannot be reduced to merely *aide-mémoires* or literary accessories. Clearly, imagery plays an important function in conveying abstract notions of spiritual transformation through embodied experience. Yet, as I have argued earlier, physical seclusion is consistently described as part of a continuum with mental seclusion, blending abstract notions of spiritual transformation with the real domain of the forest. Physical encounters with landscape appear vividly in Pāli literature in the motif of a ‘delightful place’, or pleasance. I have suggested that stock phrases that evoke landscape determined by pleasant, quiet and florid conditions have a prescriptive value related to individual spiritual progress. Whilst depictions of the pleasance in physical settings vary, they recur as a regular motif prefiguring landscape with a foretaste of transcendental happiness associated with *samādhi*. Others are clear that the pleasance is determined not by particular physical features but also upon an energetic engagement with place.¹⁸⁸ Aspects of the pleasance are found in ordinary secluded settings near villages and in idealised communal settings where the delight of seclusion is retained as the organising principle of habitat. In remote and challenging settings, the outer pleasance of landscape is vividly reflected by radically altered states of consciousness. This suggests that images of withdrawal into landscape in the Pāli texts are not just an ornamental artefact of an ancient literary tradition, but that physical seclusion can be considered as part of a continuum connecting practice and attainment.

As poetry, some of the depictions of landscape in the *Theragāthā* could be conceived purely in terms of their aesthetic quality, or *rasa* (savour). In this non-worldly sense, aesthetic pleasure is aroused with an attitude of letting go but directed towards the

¹⁸⁷ For example, see L. Elizabeth Crawford, ‘The Role of Conceptual Metaphor in Memory’, in *The Power of Metaphor: Examining Its Influence on Social Life*, ed. by Mark J. Landau, Michael D. Robinson and Brian P. Meier (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2014), pp. 65-84.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Come then, alone I will go to the forest praised by the Buddha, which is pleasant for a *bhikkhu* who is resolute and dwells alone’. My translation of Th 538:
handa eko gamissāmi araññaṃ buddhavaṇṇitaṃ
phāsuṃ ekavīhārissa pahitattassa bhikkhuno.

ultimate goal.¹⁸⁹ Still, as I argued in Chapter 3 in relation to Ṭhānissaro’s study of Indian aesthetics, a particular feature of Buddhist poetry are the savours of ‘calm’ and ‘energy’. Thus, even if the primary function of the verses is aesthetic, they can still inspire an energetic engagement with those places.¹⁹⁰ What this amounts to, I suggest, is evidence of the ‘practical psychology’ inherent in Buddhist writing that encourages an actual observation of phenomena as they are. One suspects that in this way, long periods of seclusion within that landscape, where one is deeply connected to the ‘forest of the mind’, imaginative descriptions of the landscape came to be articulated — both in terms of the immediate environment and a transformed interiority. In effect, wild plant life, as unwholesome mind states, are to be cut away and destroyed to allow grown trees to flourish. Trees representing wholesome mind states are to be protected from the harmful undergrowth of craving and delusion. Trees that cast shadows represent minds with traces of unwholesome action.

4.7 Place awareness

A further way that Pāli literature celebrates landscape can be conceived in the language of place awareness. In this section, I intend to explore how some aspects of Pāli literature could be considered part of a long tradition through history of ‘nature writing’ consonant with some strands of contemporary literature where the value of nature is described through the active immersion in the landscape.

India at the time of the Buddha was a continent known as Jambudīpa comprising of a vast variegated and mainly uncultivated landscape. According to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Jambudīpa was divided into sixteen ‘great states’ (*Soḷasa Mahājanapadas*)¹⁹¹ and had five great rivers running through it.¹⁹² A passage from the same *nikāya* states that, compared to the numerous hills, rivers, mountains and dense old growth, Jambudīpa

¹⁸⁹ ‘Aesthetic enjoyment is commonly seen as detached from the aims and concerns of ordinary life; it even, some suggest, provides a foretaste of the bliss of *mokṣa*’. Roy W. Perrett, *Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 24.

¹⁹⁰ ‘In this way, the Theragāthā makes the wilderness life of a monk attractive both aesthetically and energetically. Hence, these poems are good inducements for seeking seclusion and trying to gain the benefits of practicing there’. Ṭhānissaro, *Poems of the Elders*, p. 10.

¹⁹¹ A I 212-13: Aṅga, Maghadha, Kāsi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Ceti, Vanga, Kuru, Pañcāla, Maccha, Sūrasena, Assaka, Avanti, Gandhāra and Kamboja.

¹⁹² S II 135, 2-3: The Gangā, Yamunā, Aciravatī, Sarabhū and Mahī.

had only few delightful parks, groves, meadows and lotus ponds.¹⁹³ According to commentarial sources, roughly one third of the continent is attributed to the Himālaya.¹⁹⁴ From another source, the Himālaya is said to have six peaks from which rose five great rivers and seven lakes where amongst these ‘charming’ (*ramaṇīya*) parts, dwelling places were built.¹⁹⁵ To many of these uncultivated landscapes and places like them, many *bhikkhus* and some *bhikkhunīs*, are said to travel and lodge there to perfect their religious life through solitary meditation. The five hills¹⁹⁶ surrounding Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha, are each identified amongst a long list of distant (*dura*) places particularly sought out for this purpose.¹⁹⁷ The name Jambudīpa is itself derived from the Damba tree but such was the abundance of Jambudīpa’s untamed landscape that the whole continent is given the pseudonym *vana* – ‘woodland/forest’.¹⁹⁸

Apart from its topography, another way the Pāli texts display an awareness and appreciation of the natural world is through toponomy, or a study of place names. In some cases, place naming operates referentially, just as literal descriptors of places. For example, Pācīnavamsa, the Eastern Bamboo Park, literally stood in the eastern direction surrounded by wild bamboo.¹⁹⁹ Mahāvana, or the Great Wood, at Kapilavatthu is distinguished from the Great Wood at Vesāli by its greater antiquity — an old growth originally continuous with the Himālaya that extended to the ocean.²⁰⁰ Gijjhakūṭa, or Vulture’s Peak and Sappasonḍika-pabbhāra, or Snake’s Hood cave are each described as

¹⁹³ A I 35, 5-9.

¹⁹⁴ ‘It is said that Jambudīpa measures 10,000 yojanas in extent. There a region measuring 4,000 yojanas [...] designated “ocean”. People live in an area of 3,000 yojanas. The Himalayas are situated in an area of 3,000 yojanas; 500 yojanas in height, they are adorned with 84,000 peaks and embellished with 500 rivers flowing all around’, Pj II 437. Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Suttanipāta*, p.931. cf. Ud-a 300.

¹⁹⁵ See the *Kuṇāla Jātaka*, J V 415, 22-28. Kañcana, Maṇip, Hiṅgula, Añjana, Sānu and Phalika mountains.

¹⁹⁶ M III 68, 1-17: Isigili, Vepulla, Vebhāra, Paṇḍava and Gijjhakūṭa.

¹⁹⁷ Vin II 76, 11-23. The full list of these places listed in this passage is: 1. Vultures Peak - Gijjhakūṭa, 2. Robber’s Cliff – Corapapāta, 3. Isigili Hill on Black Rock - Isigilipassa Kāḷasilā, 4. Seven Leaf Cave on the slopes of Vebhara - Vebhārapassa Sattapaṇṇiguhā 5. The Cool Wood on the slopes of the Snake Pool - Sītavana Sappasonḍikapabbhāra, 6. Gomata Glen - Gomaṭakandarā. 7 Tinduka Tree Glenn - Tindukakandarāyaṃ, 8. Hot Spring Glen - Tapodakandarā, 9. Hot Spring Park – Tapodārāma, 10 Jivaka’s Mango Grove – Jīvakambavana, 11. Maddakucchi Deer-park. - Maddakucchi Migadāya

¹⁹⁸ *vanan ti Jambudīpaṃ* Ps II 423, 17.

¹⁹⁹ Th-a II 30, 13-16.

²⁰⁰ Ps II 73, 2-3.

‘delightful’ in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*²⁰¹ along with many other secluded places around Rājagaha. Both Vulture’s Peak and the Snake’s Hood are each thought to resemble features of the animals they refer to.²⁰² However, toponymy also operates narratively, often through an aesthetic or ethical²⁰³ appreciation of ancient India’s rich mythical history. In the Bhagga country, there was a forest called Bhesakalāvana said to be patrolled by an ogre named Bhesaka.²⁰⁴ The Bamboo Grove at Rājagaha became a squirrel sanctuary (Veḷuvana Kalandakanivāpa) on account of a tree-deity disguised as a squirrel saving a king from being bitten by a snake.²⁰⁵ Maddakucchi²⁰⁶ Migadāya, deer park, was originally where the wife of King Bimbisāra attempted to abort her unborn child, the patricidal future king Ajātasattu.²⁰⁷ On a mountain near Rājagaha there is a cave where five hundred *paccekabuddhas* are said to have entered but never seen leaving. Through a play on words, it became known as the ‘mountain that swallowed up sages’ — *isī gilati* (Isigili).²⁰⁸ The steep climb up a precipice (*papāta*) to Paṭibhānakūṭa is described as ‘frightful’ by one *bhikkhu* who follows the Buddha there for meditation.²⁰⁹ *Paṭibhāna* can be translated as ‘understanding’ or ‘confidence’.²¹⁰ In this passage the ‘climb up’ towards that knowledge is contrasted to the ‘fall’ of those who fail to understand the Four Noble Truths. It may well be that some of these place names are not strictly Buddhist but part of a shared heritage and culture. That they are retained in the Pāli imaginaire suggests an imaginative acquaintance with landscape in Indian literary tradition of which they are part.

Some of the place names function to intrinsically narrate history or myth and in some instances, aspects of the Buddhist path, with a curious attention to natural features

²⁰¹ D II 116.

²⁰² Gijjhakūṭa – Pp II 63, 25-27; Sappasonḍika-pabbhāra – Spk II 368, 5-7.

²⁰³ See also Chapter 5 about the story at *Rakkhitavanasanda* (Protected Forest) near the city of Kosambī which gained its name from an elephant who protected the Buddha from physical harm.

²⁰⁴ Th-a I 75, 16-18.

²⁰⁵ Pj II 419-420.

²⁰⁶ Literally ‘kneading the belly’.

²⁰⁷ Spk I 77, 23-27.

²⁰⁸ M III 68, 26-30. Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi translate *Isigili* as ‘Gullet of the Seers’. *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 931.

²⁰⁹ S V 448-9.

²¹⁰ PED s.v. *paṭibhāna*. Bhikkhu Bodhi translates *paṭibhāna* as ‘discrimination’ in *Numerical Discourses*, p. 515 and ‘ingenuity’ in *Suttanipāta*, p. 89. *bhānu* is another word for the ‘sun’, here perhaps representing ‘inner light’.

of landscape. Robert Macfarlane calls words with a narrative function topograms, or ‘tiny poems that conjure scenes.’²¹¹ Writing about nature and his experience of landscape, Macfarlane stresses the importance of attentiveness and observation and, especially, the urgency to preserve and articulate human acquaintance with the landscape.²¹² For Macfarlane, to know nature is to name it and this involves seeing it and an attentiveness towards it — an active immersion in the landscape. Without any linguistic sense of place, this relationship is depleted.²¹³ As an example, Macfarlane cites Keith Basso’s²¹⁴ study of the Apache people of North America whose language works fundamentally through human relation with place.²¹⁵ Place naming in early Buddhist literature functions in a way that, I suggest, is consonant with how other traditions of nature writing invite an imaginative journey through landscape. The Pāli imaginaire therefore reveals an awareness of the landscape, often through topograms of Buddhist thought and narrative, serving not only to poetically describe its existence, but also to invite human experience within it.²¹⁶

As I highlighted earlier, there has been a tendency in some discussions to conflate *arañña* or forest, as a place that can be as fruitful and dangerous, with the ‘wilderness’. For example, Harris glossed the forest as ‘wilderness’, overlooking the canonical definition of *arañña* as anything other than the village and its approach.²¹⁷ To argue how uncultivated land is undesirable, Harris cited the *Upāli-sutta* which references *jātaka* tales depicting how former cities, that had originally been forests,²¹⁸ were reverted to forests on account of mental acts of revenge. Whilst the forest is sometimes depicted as a place of suffering, passages like the *Bhayabherava-sutta*, nevertheless speak of how the experience of such places is associated with the path. Even if the forest is not always

²¹¹ MacFarlane uses the example of the Latin *con-siderare* – ‘to study or see with the stars.’ *Landmarks*, p. 6.

²¹² Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, p. 27.

²¹³ Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, p. 24.

²¹⁴ Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1996).

²¹⁵ ‘To the Apache, place-names... are used and valued for other reasons as well: aesthetically, ethically, musically... in their imagination geography and history are consubstantial.’ Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, p. 21

²¹⁶ Or as Macfarlane more poetically puts it, in relation to the how language can function in relation to the landscape of Scotland and Arizona, ‘to sing it back into being, and to sing one’s being back into it’. *Landmarks*, p. 22.

²¹⁷ Vin III 46, 30-31 (also Vism 72, 12-13).

²¹⁸ Dandakārañña, Kālingārañña, Mātangārañña or Mātangārañña. Harris, *How Environmentalist is Buddhism*, p. 108.

depicted as a pleasance and more saṃsāric, a further passage explains that it can be part of the journey to the goal. A skilful man who comes upon a fork in the road knows which path to take. He avoids the left fork and takes the right when, along his journey, he sees a dense forest-growth and later a swamp. Only after he sees a precipice does he see a delightful stretch of ground. Later, the passage reveals that the forest stands for ignorance, the swamp for sense desire, the precipice for anger grown from despair, and the delightful land as *nibbāna*.²¹⁹

It is clear that the English word ‘wilderness’, as a punishing landscape, is better reserved for Pāli terms that evoke more precise metaphorical domains of *dukkha* and images that are unequivocally saṃsāric. The term *kantāra* literally means ‘difficult to cross’²²⁰ and thus more appropriately infers ‘wilderness’ as landscape associated with hardship, discomfort or loss of life.²²¹ The hindrances are compared to a ‘road through the wilderness’.²²² Crossing them brings great relief and happiness. *Kantāra* represents the exhaustion (*khinna*) of the fruitless saṃsāric journey and also contrasts with the happiness of *jhāna* seen in terms of the cooling effects of shade and water.²²³ The Pāli term *khila* or ‘wasteland’, is figuratively a mind that is obstructed and cannot see the value in spiritual life, leading one to abandon trust, effort and striving.²²⁴ In this sense, *kantara* and *khila* work like topograms that illuminate aspects of Buddhist thought by narrating ‘scenes’ of landscape.

Marcfarlane, writing about experiences of landscape in contemporary English discourse, argues that metaphor is what enables ‘precision’ in language.²²⁵ Precision itself is not borne from rational thought but attention — ‘watching and waiting’. Marcfarlane compares the moor of Lewis in Scotland to a *terra nullis*; a ‘nothing place.’²²⁶

²¹⁹ S III 108-09.

²²⁰ PED posits that it could derive from *kad + tarati*, p. 186.

²²¹ These literal wildernesses are places associated with robbers, beasts, drought, nonhumans or famine (e.g. J I 99, 14-15).

²²² *kantāraddhānamagga*; D I 73, 4 cf. M I 276, 3.

²²³ Vism 145, 8-10.

²²⁴ D III 237-8; there are five kinds of ways the mind is like a wasteland; when it has doubts that lead to a turning away from the teacher, the teachings, his community, the training and when it has anger towards his fellow monks. Also A IV 460, 11-17 and cf A V 17-18.

²²⁵ Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, p. 33.

²²⁶ Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, p. 16.

Marcfarlane's wilderness is landscape that lacks fascination and meaning.²²⁷ In the Pāli texts however, *kantāra* or *khila* are landscapes that are precisely opposite to those that attract habitation — places where one does not linger and instead, leaves with urgency. Dangerous landscape makes striking and precise links with the psychology of *samsāra* in the Pāli imaginaire. By contrast, the forest is, as I have argued, conducive to the path despite being described in negative as well as positive terms.

From these examples of place awareness in the Pāli imaginaire, I suggest that aspects of ancient Buddhist literature can and should be considered part of a long tradition of 'nature writing'. From our brief survey of Pāli toponomy, some of the language encountered in canonical and post-canonical Pāli literature appear to be based on imaginative experience of the natural world. Acquaintance with landscape is suggested by a precision of language in relation to natural places.²²⁸ A good example is the experience of entering Añjanavana, or the 'Dark Wood', where metaphor enables a precision suggestive of an embodied acquaintance — here, for example, the experience of plunging into a thick growth of collyrium creepers and being immersed in its darkness.²²⁹ It is therefore, reasonable to suggest that the toponomy of Pāli texts connects with the actual experience of physical seclusion where language gives life to experience of place.

Despite the neo-romantic influences of some British and North American nature writers, I suggest that it is fruitful to facilitate connections between Pāli texts and contemporary 'landscape seers' who are acquainted with the vocabulary of landscape. When Marcfarlane writes of the 'mutual relations of place, language and spirit — how we landmark, and how we are landmarked',²³⁰ there is a congruence with the Pāli imaginaire which I suggest, expresses its landscape imagery with a vitality that makes it impossible to regard as mere adornment. What I think this connection across time and tradition has revealed is that, even if nature lacks ultimacy, its value is timeless and universal as a mirror of the mind itself — landscape is where the mind is revealed. The growth of the forest and the wild susurrations of trees and rivers reflect a natural state of

²²⁷ This landscape, Macfarlane writes, 'confronts us with difficulties of purchase (how to anchor perception in a context of immensity) and evaluation (how to structure significance in a context of uniformity)'. *Landmarks*, p. 16.

²²⁸ Macfarlane writes that precision implies an optimal or actual vantage point — requiring that 'one imagines it as if standing or sitting at a spot'. *Landmarks*, p. 22.

²²⁹ Th 55 and Th-a I 137, 15-19. See also Th 6 and Th 18.

²³⁰ Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, p. 13.

things in the world. They can be seen as either negative or positive and as images of the mind, they also serve to remind us that the mind can be cultivated and stilled.

Few scholars of Buddhist literature have treated in detail the value of physical seclusion from the perspective of landscape in the Pāli imaginaire. Those who have, tend to conclude that physical seclusion in the landscape is an ideal or heroic venture for hardcore ascetics. What I have tried to show instead is how the imagery of nature and landscape in the Pāli imaginaire both connects and contrasts with some, more prescriptions for physical seclusion from elsewhere in the *nikāyas*. Resorting to the landscape for meditation is an expression of skilful desire — a call to the forest that orientates all *bhikkhus/bhikkhunīs* towards the end of suffering. The value of withdrawal into nature is voiced not just in canonical sources but also in later exegetical writings where some might expect more critical attitudes towards forest withdrawal. We can, for example, note how in the following commentarial play on the verb *vanayati*,²³¹ the woodland comes alive as an attractive place to dwell:²³²

vanam means ‘it attracts’. It causes desire (*vanayati*) so it is a grove (*vaṇa*). It causes beings’ devotion to their own perfection: ‘it produces affection for oneself’ is the meaning. Or, ‘it desires’ (*vanute*) so it is a grove (*vaṇa*): it is as if, with the sounds of birds such as cuckoos, excited by the fragrance of various flowers, and with branches, shoots and leaves of trees and bushes stirred by the gentle breeze, it beckons all beings, saying, ‘Come! Enjoy me!’²³³

And, from contemporary voices, such as nature writer Peter Matthiessen, we can note a similar appreciation of landscape as the place where inner illumination gains its most powerful expression: ‘The secret of the mountain is that the mountains simply exist, as I do myself: the mountains exist simply, which I do not... I ring with life, and the mountains ring, and when I hear it, there is a ringing that we share’.²³⁴

²³¹ The causative of \sqrt{van} – ‘to like, love, wish, desire’; MW s.v. *van*.

²³² The passage is taken from the commentary to the *Mūlapariyāya-sutta*. I note that Bhikkhu Bodhi has omitted to translate this passage in his detailed exposition of the *sutta* and its commentary. See: *The Discourse on the Root of Existence: The Mūlapariyāyasutta and Its Commentarial Exegesis* (Kandy: BPS, 1980).

²³³ My translation of Ps I 10-11 from Woods & Kosambi, Vol I pp. 10-11: *vanayatī ti vanam, attasampadāya sattānaṃ bhattiṃ kāreti, attani sinehaṃ uppādetī ti attho. vanute iti vā vanam, nānāvidhakusumagandhasammōdamattakokilādivihaṅgamābhirutehi mandamālutacalitarukkhasākhāviṭṭapapallavapalāsehi ca etha maṃ paribhuñjathā ti sabbapāṇino yācati viyā ti attho.* cf Ud-a 56, 1-5.

²³⁴ Peter Matthiessen, *The Snow Leopard* (London: Penguin, 1998).

4.8 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to better understand the value of solitude envisaged through copious references to nature imagery and landscape in the Pāli texts. I have argued that landscape is often imagined as a deeply experiential metaphor of the mind that connects with the practice of meditative seclusion that is conceived elsewhere as part of normative descriptions of the Buddhist path for enlightenment.

It may be tempting to assume that, according to past discussion, the central concern of the compilers of the Pāli *nikāyas* with regard to nature is its ethical value. I have attempted to balance this interpretative framework with one that shows how landscape figures in the meditative path. I have, therefore, treated the subject at a purely literary level with a focus on the imagery of landscape in relation to the path that leads to gradual cessation of *dukkha*. The forest may not have ‘purpose’ if all conditioned things are impermanent, but this does not mean that human beings should not purposefully encounter it.

The motif of the delightful place in Buddhist literature is discerned in the beauty and simplicity of mundane landscape. I have identified it with an initial skilful form of worldly desire that inspires monks and nuns to regularly withdraw—sometimes for extended periods—into quiet secluded places. This form of desire chimes with the non-worldly delight that accompanies a mind that is progressively silenced and stilled—until it experiences a lasting happiness that is sublime and ineffable. It is also possible to detect different emphases and even tensions between the desolation of the cemetery as a real place described in formulae for *kāyaviveka* and more idealised images of landscape as *locus amoenus*. Whilst we can detect multiple perspectives within, the *nikāyas* as a single genre of literature, I have tried to show how I think the pleasance works at the interplay between the literal and figurative. Spiritual felicity is a recognisable component in the descriptions of the experience of meditation; where notions of solitude can be easily conceived. However, the felicity associated with mundane earthly settings has not, I think, been fully appreciated. Consequently, the practical aspects of idealised images of solitude, as a valid component of the path, tends to get overlooked.

Final liberation may not involve finding ultimate value in conditioned things, but it is precisely in the conditioned world that an ordinary *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhunī* strives to fully comprehend suffering and its cessation. Significantly, from the language and

imagery of physical withdrawal, forest and other ‘empty places’ appear as a vital juncture between *samsāra* and *nibbāna*.

Robert Macfarlane writes, from his own travels and from those who inspire him, how ‘both terrain and mind stand revealed’.²³⁵ I have attempted to demonstrate how this might also be true of the Pāli imaginaire. Yet from the perspective of the Buddhist compilers, it is the mind that is much more formally explored in imagery and with far greater precision. I have compared examples of contemporary nature writing from those who have evidently invested time alone in the landscape with the Pāli imaginaire. By doing so, I have argued that the Pāli imaginaire can be considered part of a long tradition of literature that imaginatively explores relationships between language and landscape. In the case of the Pāli imaginaire, it is the religious value of forest meditation that is illuminated within this interconnection. As a result, landscape imagery cannot be dismissed as a simple ornamental feature of ascetic literature. It also inspires practical encounters with place that facilitate spiritual growth as a fundamental feature of meditative life.

In the forest and other ‘empty places’ of untamed landscape, there are no immediate objects to covet; only the stark reality of the mind. It seems to me that at a literary level, paradoxical images of landscape in the vast variegated continent of Jambudīpa, with its mountain peaks and woodland depths, lakes and hollows reflect the nature of the mind itself. Like the mind of an ordinary *bhikkhu*, this landscape can be dark, mysterious, fearful and unpredictable. And yet by ascending its heights and plunging its depths, a *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* comes to know that his/her mind, like the landscape can also be delightful, calm, harmonious powerful, and, even promises a lasting transformation.

²³⁵ Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, p. 220.

Chapter 5

‘United in Mind, Separated by Body’: Solitude and Companionship in Buddhist Narrative

*In the midst of the Saṅgha, he does not engage in gossip or talk on this or that.
Either he speaks about Dhamma or he invites another to do so,
or he has no disdain for noble silence.¹*

5.1 Introduction

At one time, when the Buddha was staying at the Ghositārāma monastery near Kosambī during the reign of King Udena, a local Brahmin offered his daughter, Magandiya, in marriage to the Buddha thinking that he was the only one worthy of her. Slighted by the Buddha’s refusal, Magandiya became very bitter and vowed to take revenge on him. One day, after Magandiya had married, she learned that the Buddha had visited the city of Kosambī. She quickly hired some people to greet the Buddha with abusive and unwelcoming words. Despite Ānanda’s pleas to leave town, the Buddha held firm, explaining:

Whenever a tumult arises, even there should we remain until that tumult dies away, and only under those circumstances should we go elsewhere... I am like an elephant that has entered the fray. And even as it is incumbent upon an elephant that has entered the fray that he should withstand the arrows which come from the four quarters, precisely it is my duty to endure the words spoken by wicked men.²

In the end, the Buddha’s aggressors came to realise their wrongdoing and some of them even attained stream-entry. Enmity was dispelled and the Buddha lived and wandered peacefully amongst the people of Kosambī. From this story and the verses linked to it, it is easy to learn how enmity is overcome by the virtue of forbearance. The passage uses a familiar trope of the elephant (*nāga*) as an unequivocal image of accomplishment in

¹ A IV 153, 7-9. Translation adapted from Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses*, p. 1113.

² Taken from the commentary to verses 320-2 in the *Nāga Vagga* of the *Dhammapada*, Dhpa IV 2, 10-16. Translation by Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends, Part 3*, pp. 199-200.

ascetic practice. By contrast to this story is another incident, also at Kosambī, but this time involving the Buddha's own *bhikkhus*.

In our second story, which the Theravāda tradition places in the Buddha's ninth rains retreat³ a quarrel between two *bhikkhus* resident at Ghositārāma breaks out and engulfs the entire community. One of the *bhikkhus* is suspended but together with his supporters forms a faction that remains at loggerheads with his indicter and his rival supporters. As a result, the community is deeply fragmented. The Buddha intervenes but is unable to get the two sides to resolve their dispute. After being reprimanded by his own *bhikkhus*, the Buddha leaves the monastery and after a period of wandering and more positive encounters with other *bhikkhus*, he settles alone in the forest at Pārileyakka. He lives there for the remainder of the rainy season in the company of a lone elephant who, like the Buddha, has retreated from his own 'crowd'. At the end of the rains-retreat, the Buddha leaves Pārileyakka for Sāvatti, where the dispute is finally settled.

This brief comparison between the two stories raises the question why, in the first story, the Buddha appeases hostility whilst remaining within the crowd, but in the second story, he separates himself totally from hostility for a period of solitude. In the latter, the Buddha might appear to the historian as curiously aloof and even defeatist.

We could approach the above question with a purely historical eye and focus exclusively on the story as a record of a real incident trying to tease out the historical facts and the intentions of the Buddha's actions. Or, we could suspend historical judgement and engage with the symbolism and imagery of the text in an attempt to understand why this story has been preserved the way it is.

Whilst clearly the arc of the story of the 'Kosambī quarrel' is the settlement of a dispute and a teaching about the importance of monastic fraternity and companionship, its imagery also gives voice to, I argue, retreat and self-reliance. It is the latter dimension of the story that I wish to illuminate in particular. The story is cross-referenced in several Pāli sources from elsewhere in the canon which are combined as events in an extended narrative with a beginning, middle and end. The question I intend to answer is; why did

³ The primary source of the assignment of Kosambī and Pārileyakka to the ninth and tenth rainy season respectively is the commentary to the *Buddhavaṃsa*, (*Madhuratthavilāsīnī*); see Edward Joseph Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History*, 1st edition (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1931), p. 97 n. 1.

the redactors of the canon choose to place the Buddha in solitude in a series of events and in a particular order?

I will attempt to show how this single extended narrative appears as a vignette of many of the themes addressed throughout this study. The story recapitulates the importance of monastic cohesion and friendship and the relationship of renouncers to society at large whilst also reminds the reader of the challenges of living in a religious community. The imagery of physical separation as a salutary remedial step away from disquiet connects with the potentially purifying effects of the peaceful forest. The notion of leaving society — permanently in terms of the household and temporarily in terms of the monastic community — form parts of a continuum connected to lasting separation from unwholesome psychological states. Monastic communities are not perfect and can resemble society at large. Society and forest thus appear to represent *saṃsāra* and *nibbāna* respectively. The story shows how quiet, friendly communities are favourable to individual growth. Although a *bhikkhu* is bound up with the issues of society, his real concern is with ultimate matters of truth and liberation. In the story, solitude is not conceived as what it might popularly be imagined to be. Whilst the story gives voice to the importance of monastic community, my aim is to trace its complementary perspective on solitude in terms of both practice and as spiritual qualities.

In what follows, I will first explore the limited treatment of the story in secondary literature and focus on one scholar who has treated the story's narrative and imagery. I discuss the methods used by past scholars that have shaped my own approach to the narrative. I will also discuss how methods used in biblical scholarship can also be fruitful in identifying the structure of the narrative and how this can help with interpreting values that underline Buddhist narratives. I will summarise the arc of the story as ten 'scenes' or events that make up the extended narrative and attempt to justify my use of both canonical and non-canonical sources together. In doing so, I attempt to examine the extent of variation between the two sources, along with other canonical references to the story that, as far as I know, has not yet been undertaken.

My own interpretation is that this story reminds the reader/listener of a basic paradox in an ordinary *bhikkhu*'s life, namely the ideals of individual practice and community principles — as equally valid arenas that sometimes appear in tension. I will argue that the Buddha's dwelling in the forest brings this paradox into focus whilst the imagery gives voice to the values of both seclusion and simpler communities as salutary aspects of the path. This brings to attention the multivocality inherent to various strata of

Pāli texts. From canon, we can trace how, on one hand, those who seek out the peace and quiet of the forest for spiritual rewards gain the praise of the Buddha. From the commentarial version, on the other, we can clearly perceive the spiritual rewards of those who place their trust and devotion in the Buddha.

5.2 The Kosambī quarrel as history and literature

Previous studies that have touched upon the textual sources of the ‘Kosambī quarrel’ have tended to focus on the story’s origins and history rather than as literature. Commenting on the authenticity of the text and other ‘legendary’ events situated at Kauśāmbī, Étienne Lamotte noted that, since these stories are widely affirmed by the *sūtra* and *vinaya* works of other Buddhist traditions, they cannot be considered later inventions.⁴ John Ireland adopted a similar approach by looking across a number of Pāli *suttas* which reference the incident both directly and indirectly.⁵ Ireland argued that the events within the Kosambī cycle of *suttas* gradually culminate in a schism⁶ and highlights the ‘Kosambī quarrel’ as a significant occurrence with regard to this aspect of early Buddhist history.⁷ Despite his extensive study of ‘forest saints’, Reginald Ray devotes only a footnote to the Buddha’s solitude at Pārileyakka. Ray notes the story as an example of the Buddha’s ‘essentially forest personage’ as an authentic early characterisation.⁸ He cites the *Suttanipāta* as evidence of the Buddha as a ‘saint of the forest’ for whom

⁴ Étienne Lamotte, *The History of Indian Buddhism – From the Origins to the Śaka era*, Translated by Webb-Bonn, S. (Louvain-Paris: Peeters Press, 1988), p. 323. According to Bhikkhu Anālayo, parts of the Kosambī story have counterparts in the Dharmaguptaka, (T 1428 at T XXII 879b-882c), Mahāsāṅghika, (T 1425 at TXXII 333c-335b) and (Mulā-)Sarvāstivāda *vinayas* (T1421 at T XXII 158c-160b). *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya*, Vol 1 & 2 (Taipei: Dharma Drum, 2011), p. 731.

⁵ John Ireland, ‘The Kosambī Suttas’, *Pali Buddhist Review*, 1 No.2 (1976), 105-21, p. 108. Ireland refers to the entire body of *suttas* attributed to Kosambī, not just the ‘Kosambī quarrel’.

⁶ In this story, no schism in the order actually takes place. The first schism is attributed to Devadatta and is thought to have occurred much later in the Buddha’s life as recorded in the *Cullavagga* Chapter VII of the *Vinayapiṭaka*. (Vin II 188ff.)

⁷ Ireland, *Kosambī Suttas*, p.113. Ireland’s main finding in this study is the association of Ānanda with Kosambī (p. 121). Ireland noted that out of the thirty-two Kosambī *suttas*, twelve are delivered by Ānanda and four by other *bhikkhus* (p. 114). It is worth pointing out in addition to this, of the sixteen in which the Buddha is present, ten concern quarrels, correct behaviour of *bhikkhus* or on relationships.

⁸ Ray, *Buddhist Saints in India*, pp. 64 and 76, n. 57.

community played no significant role in his life.⁹ However Ray's comments appear in tension with his own overall assessment of the *vinaya* which is the canonical basis of the extended narrative. He argues that the *vinaya* should not be regarded as the most authentic portrait of Buddhist renunciant life. This is important for Ray because, for him, the *vinaya* is the chief source of the 'two-tiered' model of Buddhism and the 'town-and-village' renunciant ideal which he suggests is typically represented by Theravāda Buddhism.¹⁰ Along with the *Suttanipāta*, Ray draws heavily on the *Buddhacarita*¹¹ to embellish his argument for the importance of the forest as a recurring motif in the Buddha's life.

Gregory Schopen contrasts the *vinaya*, along with other textual sources, with material evidence from archaeology. Textual sources are a testimony to the abstract ideals of a particular 'atypical' community'.¹² Schopen would, no doubt, suggest that some literary scholars would prioritise the story's textual source and overlook concrete epigraphical evidence for any historical significance. Any attempt to read *sutta* and *vinaya* material as historical sources is therefore naïve. The closest epigraphical evidence of the story is Aśoka's edict at Kauśambī¹³ which mentions the need for unity in the *Saṅgha* but makes no other reference to events in our story.¹⁴

In response to Schopen, I restate that although forest practice has remained a prominent, if not, minority endeavour in the lived Theravāda tradition, it appears as a salient and consistent value across a significant strata of Pāli source texts. In terms of my own interpretation of the *vinaya* and commentarial sources of this story, I have adduced examples from the later commentaries in this study that do not contradict the importance of physical withdrawal from the group and that reasserts the importance of *kāyaviveka*.

⁹ Ray, *Buddhist Saints in India*, p. 63.

¹⁰ Ray, *Buddhist Saints in India*, p. 23ff. Ray first posits a working model that substitutes the 'two-tiered' system comprising monk and laity that underpins Buddhism, with an alternative three-tiered one which abstracts out and includes the forest renunciant.

¹¹ 'Acts of the Buddha'; ascribed to Aśvaghōṣa and thought to be dated c. 2nd Century BCE; Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha*, p.xvii.

¹² Gregory Schopen, 'Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism', *History of Religions*, 31 No.1 (1991), 1-23, pp. 2-4.

¹³ This edict formulates certain restrictions into the order and insists that unity prevail between members of the order, condemns 'disunion in the community' (*saṅghabheda*) and compels whoever provokes it to return to the white robe. Lamotte, *The History of Indian Buddhism* (trans), p. 237.

¹⁴ Related epigraphy on the 'gift of the monkey' appears on the Sāñci *stūpa*, c. BCE 25-25 CE, see below.

Such evidence should be taken to balance Schopen, Ray and others who follow the Weberian theory that the earlier ascetic way of life was suppressed by a more cenobitic monastic institutionalised Buddhism. Although the *vinaya* and commentary present separate dénouements of the story, the Buddha's solitude is, I shall argue, a fulcrum in a narrative arc of harmony in the community and as such, not necessarily undermined by commentarial embellishment. When read as part of an imaginaire encased by imagery and storytelling, the Buddha's withdrawal can be seen to inspire introspection and withdrawal and is consistent with the notion of self-improvement (*attasampadā*) that, as I have noted elsewhere, is valued in commentarial layers. I hope to show how the story provides a bridge to Buddhist concepts described by more formulaic or systematic expressions of doctrine that conceives of solitude as part of a complex of practices that maintains the values of both community and meditative experience.

I would raise only one other point about the history of the story. That is, to suggest that as an ostensibly 'difficult' episode in the Buddha's life, the story provides a plausible source of historical information. Jan Nattier¹⁵ includes the 'quarrel at Kosambī' story as an example of the 'principle of embarrassment' which asserts that if a historical story exposes an awkward or difficult situation, it tends to reflect a more realistic picture since such a story is unlikely to have been fabricated. As we shall see, neither *vinaya* nor commentary try to conceal what is at best a hiatus in the Buddha's teaching career, or worse, a potentially schismatic incident.¹⁶ The eventual schism of the *Saṅgha*, caused by the Buddha's cousin, Devadatta and also narrated in the *vinaya*, is arguably another separate example. The Buddha's inability to win over his interlocutors is rarely displayed in the *suttas* but is not unknown. A similar example appears in the story of *bhikkhus* who commit suicide after misunderstanding a teaching on mindfulness of the 'unlovely' (*asubha*) aspects of body, revealing a complex reality to early monasticism. This story exists in interesting juxtaposition to the 'Kosambī quarrel' as an example of where religious community goes badly wrong. After the Buddha teaches the *asubha* meditation, he enters into seclusion for two weeks. However, instead of using meditation to combat

¹⁵ Nattier cites the reception of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sutra* alongside the Kosambī quarrel: 'When an author reveals, in the course of a discussion, something that is quite unflattering to the group or the position that he or she represents, there is a high degree of probability that the statement has a basis in fact'. *A Few Good Men*, p. 65.

¹⁶ Another example of when the Buddha quashes a quarrel before it escalates is found at S II 203-05.

lust, the *bhikkhus* are repelled by their own bodies and together, ‘take the knife’ as a group.¹⁷

The main canonical sources of the story of the Buddha’s solitude examined here forms a chapter of Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli’s *The Life of the Buddha*.¹⁸ His sources include the *Mahāvagga* of the *Vinayaṭṭakā* X-1-5 (Vin I 337-57), the *Upakkilesa-sutta* (M III 153-62), the *Nāga-sutta* of the *Udāna* (Ud 41-42) and the *Pārileyyaka-sutta* (S III 94-100). These *suttas* themselves refer to additional canonical verses from the *Jātaka* (J III 212 and J III 488), *Theragāthā* (v.275), *Dhammapada* (vv.3-6 and vv.328-30) and the *Suttanipāta* (v.456). The incident is also referenced elsewhere in additional canonical passages that are not mentioned in Ñāṇamoli’s book. I include these sources in a summary below.

In his preface to *The Life of the Buddha*, Ñāṇamoli acknowledges the commentaries as chronological evidence to the episodes of the Buddha’s life.¹⁹ However, by omitting the commentaries from his account of the ‘Kosambī quarrel’ story, their narrative embellishments, notably those unlikely to be favoured by some scholars, have been obscured to a wider readership.²⁰ I refer to the colourful aspects of the Buddha’s solitude in the protected forest which do not appear in Ñāṇamoli’s account. Instead, Ñāṇamoli preserves the sequence according to the chronology of events implicit to the *Mahāvagga* account. Ñāṇamoli clearly intended to limit his depiction to canonical sources, but in

¹⁷ S V 320-22. We can never know with certainty if the *bhikkhus* in question decide to commit suicide independently after solitary practice or after discussion amongst themselves in groups. If taken as a group, it could be construed as an example of community practice gone tragically wrong. However, it could also suggest the danger of solitary practice in the context of the collective endeavour of teaching and practice. I am grateful to Naomi Appleton for the latter point.

¹⁸ Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha As It Appears in the Pali Canon* (Kandy: BPS, 1992), pp. 109-19.

¹⁹ Ñāṇamoli, *Life of the Buddha*, p xiii.

²⁰ In his essay on the vicissitudes of vernacular texts within Buddhist scholarship, Charles Hallisey criticises scholars who use non-canonical texts as tools to understand more ‘historically accurate’ canonical material: ‘In this view, commentaries and translations were not the record of the growing understanding of a text, of the accumulation of evolving interpretation over the centuries; instead they were signposts for those in the present to recover accurately the meaning that had been promulgated in the past. They were instrumentally valuable, but were without interest in their own right’. ‘Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravada Buddhism’, in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. by Lopez, D.S. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995) pp. 31-61, p. 43.

doing so, he has neglected the main source of symbolism and allegory which appears as a fulcrum in the commentarial version.

Although my focus will be the canonical sources of the story in Pāli, I will refer to an additional non-canonical Pāli source — the story as it exists as a commentary to verses 6 and 328-30 of the *Dhammapada* (*Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*):²¹

Should one get a prudent companion,
Who will move about with one, a wise one who leads a good life,
Let one move with him
All dangers overcoming, mindful and happy.

Should one not get a prudent companion,
Who will move about with one, a wise one who leads a good life,
Let one wander alone,
Like a kind who has left behind a conquered land,
Like the elephant in the Mātāṅga forest.²²

By including the story from the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* I acknowledge a particular form of conversation with the earlier texts that not only adapts and elaborates the interpretation of the Buddha's solitude but also preserves certain ideals and archetypes within the contours of a later stratum of text. Many of the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* stories were translated into Sinhala in the thirteen-century by Dharmasēna Thera in a collection called the *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* which is still used today as a rich source of popular sermon stories for Sri Lankan Buddhists.²³ Moreover, according to Peter Skilling, the proximity of the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* to the Theravādin canon, gives it a status akin to any *sutta*.²⁴

²¹ Dhpa I 53-65. The *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* is dated c. 5th Century BCE and traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa.

²² Translation by Carter and Palihawadana, *The Dhammapada*, p. 348.

²³ See Dharmasēna Thera's *Jewels of the doctrine: Stories of the Saddharma Ratnāvaliya*, Translated by Ranjini Obeyesekere (Albany: SUNY, 1991), pp. ix-xxiii. Also, as Rita Langer's study shows, preaching sermons remains a principle way Buddhism is understood by the peoples of rural Sri Lanka. *Sermon Studies and Buddhism: A Case Study of Sri Lankan Preaching*. *Studia Philologica Buddhica*, vol. 30 (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2013).

²⁴ 'But through its association with the canonical *Dhammapada*, through its purported authorship by Buddhaghosa, and through language — the very fact that it is in Pāli — its stories have achieved the status of history or biography, and for many Theravādins the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* is as authoritative as any *sūtra*, and certainly more familiar'. 'Scriptural Authenticity and the Śrāvaka Schools: An Essay towards an Indian Perspective', *The Eastern Buddhist*, 41 No. 2 (2010), 1-48, p. 31.

Therefore, the commentary has a unique status. As a complete narrative, the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* fills in and consolidates the various passages found in the *Mahāvagga* and forms a single extended narrative. Unlike the usual explanatory style of Pāli commentarial literature, the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* follows the same narrative sequence as the *Mahāvagga* account but with additional narrative excursions. For its interpretation of the *Dhammapada* verses, the commentator has included narrative elaboration not found in the *Mahāvagga* account and privileges storytelling over exegesis.²⁵ In sum, I do not neglect (as Ñāṇamoli has done) the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* in this study, for two main reasons. Firstly, as an exposition of canonical verses, it is a rich source of interpretation written in an evocative style. Secondly, its version of the story is itself an example of a relatively understudied piece of Buddhist literature.²⁶

One scholar who has engaged with the imaginative aspects of the ‘Kosambī quarrel’ is Reiko Ohnuma who shows how the story collapses distinctions between human and non-human characters as a context for the Buddha’s withdrawal.²⁷ Ohnuma describes how the Buddha, as a character, retreats ‘in disgust’ whilst highlighting how the commentaries absolve the Buddha of mental suffering.²⁸ In finding a kindred spirit in the lone elephant, the Buddha’s departure, according to Ohnuma, is vindicated. Ohnuma then explains how human superiority is reinstated through the elephant’s subservience and devotion and the gift of honey from a monkey — a character added in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*. So, the animals have a dual function: to validate the human character but also to reinstate a hierarchy.²⁹ Ohnuma explains that the interplay between categories of human and animal encourage a reflection on the role of key characters along

²⁵ ‘Finally, as in the case of the *Dhammapada* Commentary, the exegesis of the text becomes a matter of secondary importance altogether and is relegated to the background...and to all intents and purposes, what was a commentary has become nothing more or less than a huge collection of folk-tales.’ Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 1*, p. 26).

²⁶ Some of the strategies employed by the commentary are explored by Sarah Heymans in her unpublished PhD thesis on ethics in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*. (2001). For example, its ‘prose-and-verse’ style akin to the *Udāna* and *Jātaka*; the use of intertextuality to help orientate the listener’s/reader’s understanding of the story, and, deliberately pausing and stretching out scenes to add emphasis. *Stories about ‘How to live the best kind of life’: Narrative and Ethics in the Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā* (University of Bristol: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2001)

²⁷ Reiko Ohnuma, ‘An Elephant Good to Think — The Buddha in Pārileyakka Forest’, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 35 No. 1-2 (2012), 259-94.

²⁸ Ohnuma, *An Elephant Good to Think*, pp. 264-65.

²⁹ Ohnuma, *An Elephant Good to Think*, p. 266.

the ‘human/animal spectrum’.³⁰ She highlights how the elephant contrasts with the ‘animalistic’ behaviour of quarrelling *bhikkhus*. Because of this contrast, we can understand how ‘true “humanity”’ is defined not by one’s outward form or species, but rather, by one’s conscious exercise of moral decorum and restraint.’³¹

Ohnuma’s study helpfully gathers together sources of the story and carefully examines how categories of humanity and animality, forest and monastery contrast in different scenes in the story. It highlights the ideal of a paradise on earth absent of distinctions between the ‘wild’ and the ‘tame’. However, the oscillation between humanity and animality of the elephant and monkey makes it difficult to include them as characters with an overall role in the same way as the Buddha. Whilst focusing on the role of characters in a story, her study appears to betray the question why the Buddha is motivated the way he is in the story. Whilst such questions might be valid especially in quasi-historical contexts, they tend to encourage historicist interpretations. Ohnuma tries to avoid this by focussing on the symbolism and how the story ‘shows’ rather than ‘tells’ us about the characters. I would suggest that it is not the vindication of the Buddha’s departure that is the most interesting aspect of the story, rather a narration of a paradox the heart of an ordinary *bhikkhu*’s communal life.

5.3 Narrative methods

Narrative can be understood as a manifestation of a story through a particular portrayal of events. From a sequence of narrative events, the audience gains knowledge of the overall story and its plot as the relationship between those events. Events are usually narrated in the form of ‘speech, action and commentary’.³² Narrative critics are interested in how characters and events, as constructs of the authors, are revealed to their readers. This is typically done, especially in fiction, through a combination of ‘showing’ and ‘telling’. As Mark Powell notes with respect to biblical texts, ‘telling’ involves the voice of a ‘reliable narrator’ speaking plainly and didactically. ‘Showing’ is less precise and requires more from the reader.³³ ‘Showing’ presents a more interesting dimension to

³⁰ Ohnuma, *An Elephant Good to Think*, p. 274.

³¹ Ohnuma, *An Elephant Good to Think*, p. 276.

³² Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis – A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2000), p. 86.

³³ Mark A. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism? A New Approach to the Bible* (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 52.

storytelling by presenting the characters' point of view through their actions, speech, thoughts/emotions and beliefs.

In this chapter, I will explore the events or scenes of the 'Kosambī quarrel' comprising actions, speech and commentary as a particular presentation or sequence in both the *Mahāvagga* and *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*. My aim is to get behind the narrative and explore why it has been constructed as such in its redacted forms and understand their significance as the story unfolds. In doing so, I hope to engage with the content of the story both critically and creatively in a manner that is complementary to a purely historical-critical approach.

Charles Hallisey and Anne Hansen, who have explored the impact of narratives in Buddhist literature, argue that in the past, little attention has been given to how the audience could engage with the ethical dimensions of Buddhist narrative through either its structure or content. Hallisey and Hansen argue for what Dominick Le Capra calls the 'worklike' aspects of interpreting complex texts, which Le Capra contrasts with reading texts for factual content. The latter 'documentary' approach examines a text in relation to an empirical reality situated in history. Le Capra (and Hallisey and Hansen) argue that the 'worklike' approach engages the reader/listener in a more dialogical enquiry.³⁴

The 'worklike' approach requires the audience to engage more with the imaginative, ironical, and perhaps contentious aspects of complex texts. For example, Hallisey and Hansen show how the harrowing story of Aṅguimāla the robber, whose reign of terror is ended by the Buddha, is used to not only condemn his terrible acts but also to stir sympathy and concern for the wrongdoer. Such stories then engender in the listener/reader the 'heterogeneity of judgement that typically nuances Buddhist moral experience';³⁵ both disgust and pity in the case of Aṅguimāla's tale. In doing so, stories, according to Hallisey and Hansen, have the capacity to 'prefigure' ethical behaviour by cultivating a more imaginative dialogue with the reader/listener.

Steven Collins, like Hallisey and Hansen, gave preference to assessing how narratives can engage their audience to reflect critically but in imaginative and

³⁴ Charles Hallisey and Anne Hanson, 'Narrative, Sub-Ethics, and the Moral Life', *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 24 No.2, (1996), 305-27, p. 307.

³⁵ 'Wicked actions are condemned while the doer of those actions become the object of sympathy and concern.' Hallisey and Hanson, *Narrative, Sub-Ethics, and the Moral Life*, p. 315.

emotionally evocative ways.³⁶ Collins examined the ‘worklike’³⁷ aspects of the *Vessantara Jātaka*³⁸ to illustrate its impact on a premodern audience. For Collins, its imagery serves as a focal point of the story connecting directly with the audience in order to stir in their hearts a sense of the Bodhisatta’s emotional turmoil and tragic heroics in his pursuit of *nibbāna*.³⁹ Collins demonstrated how in the *Vessantara Jātaka* the forest fluctuates between being pleasant and dangerous. The forest is described as a place of penance that is full of terrible and fierce beasts. Yet by dint of the Bodhisatta’s perfections, those beasts live in harmony with him and other animals. Earthly manifestations of paradise, or heaven, through use of specific imagery, though not the same as the unconditioned realm of *nibbāna*, only differ from *nibbāna* in degree rather than kind.⁴⁰

By unpacking narratives like the *Vessantara Jātaka*, Collins’ showed how the imagery found within them can act as a bridge between Buddhist ‘systematic’ and ‘narrative thought’ in the Pāli imaginaire. Distinguishing the two, Collins writes:

Buddhist systematic thought presents a static arrangement of ideas, which are connected by logical not temporal relations; its narratives, whether the overall mastertext or the stories told in actual texts, are by necessity temporally structured.⁴¹

In other words, because systematic expositions of doctrine are usually related logically, they do not rely on any ordering for their efficacy.⁴² The ordering of events, scenes and parts of narrative, however, is crucial to how they give rise to meanings. It is because of

³⁶ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 413.

³⁷ ‘[I]f one looks at the worklike aspects of the Pali *Vessantara Jātaka*, it can be seen to confront, in a quite extraordinarily direct and open-ended way, the real human difficulties attendant on the minority option of asceticism...’ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 45.

³⁸ Also known as the *Mahājātaka*, this is the penultimate birth story of the *bodhisatta* before his rebirth in heaven and his final birth as Siddhattha Gotama.

³⁹ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 538 and 551.

⁴⁰ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 291.

⁴¹ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 284.

⁴² They may however, as Rupert Gethin has shown with respect to lists (*mātikās*), interrelate with each other in three ways: one may subsume another, one may be substituted for another and one may suggest another by association, for the purpose of memorisation, mindfulness and meditation. ‘The *Mātikās*: Memorization, Mindfulness, and the List’, in *In the Mirror of Memory. Reflections on Mindfulness and Memory in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. by Janet Gyatso (New York: State University of New York, 1992), pp. 149-172.

this specific and necessary sequencing, Collins argued, like Hayden White,⁴³ that the content of events in the form of speech, action and comes pre-loaded with ideology or explanation even before they are fashioned into a beginning, middle and end.⁴⁴ Collins showed how the intrinsic concept of *nibbāna* found in Theravādin Buddhist systematic thought is brought to life in the imagery of stories like the *Vessantara Jātaka*.⁴⁵ We can, in a similar way, understand the imagery of idyllic simplicity, seclusion and harmony in the Pārileyyaka forest as a narration of *nibbāna*.

There are other nuances to the source story that are worth mentioning. It is important to note, firstly, that Buddhist texts should not be necessarily classified as either systematic or narrative since both *sutta* and commentary often move between both. Although the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* contains examples of systematic lists incorporated into its stories,⁴⁶ the ‘Kosambī quarrel’ story is wholly narrative. Secondly, it is also important to note that in our narrative sequence, *nibbāna* is not the ‘closure-maker’⁴⁷ and the ‘full stop’ of the overall story. *Nibbāna* is paradoxically narrated in the scenes of the forest without any reference to any structured or systematic exposition. As such, the scene warrants careful scrutiny with regards to the overall construction of the story.

This brings me to my final point which is to ask how biblical exegetical methods can help us understand the structure of Buddhist texts. The borrowing of methods from biblical studies is not new to Buddhist scholarship. Vesna Wallace has argued how some postmodern biblical scholarship employs a ‘conversational hermeneutic’ to analyse its subject matter, the manner in which it says it, and the active role of the interpreter.⁴⁸ Although my focus is on the ‘worklike’ approach of the text and the premodern audience, Wallace convincingly borrows a principle from biblical methods as a valid alternative to the historical-critical approach to Buddhist texts. Observing how biblical texts display

⁴³ *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

⁴⁴ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 123.

⁴⁵ Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 573.

⁴⁶ Sarah Heymans, *How to Live the Best Kind of Life*, p. 41.

⁴⁷ Collins shows that the understanding of *nibbāna* in systematic thought as ‘closure-maker’ is mirrored in narrative thought. *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 114.

⁴⁸ In this way, Buddhist communities enter into a dialogue with the text as an interpretive factor. Vesna Wallace, ‘The Methodological Relevance of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship to the Study of Buddhism’, in *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars*, ed. by Jackson, R.R., et al (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), pp. 78-94, p. 83.

common structural patterns can also be fruitful for the task at hand, since as Michael Gorman notes, such patterns also occur outside the Bible.⁴⁹ Some appear more frequently than others in biblical texts, such as ‘repetition’ and ‘antithesis’ which also feature regularly in Buddhist texts.⁵⁰ Another pattern common to the Bible is ‘parallelism’ in which similar or contrasting themes appear in poetic stanza form or as separate segments of texts (A//A’).⁵¹ Sometimes, segments that repeat the same theme appear at the beginning and the end of a text (‘inclusio’) as a ‘chiasmus’ (AB//B’A’). Gorman also identifies how some texts include two or more parallelisms combined together with a focal point that acts as a fulcrum for the text as a whole (AB//C//’B’A’).⁵² Whilst such parallelism usually involves similar or related themes, they do also allow for contrasting set of themes to be constructed in the same way.

5.4 The Kosambī quarrel in ten scenes

What follows is a comparison of the narrative arc of the ‘Kosambī quarrel’ story as presented in the *Mahāvagga* and the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* summarised into ten scenes. I will focus on the key differences in both renderings, especially in the treatment of the Buddha’s solitary period, separate from the community.

5.4.1 The quarrel

The *Mahāvagga* version begins with an acknowledgement that an unspecified offence had been committed by an unnamed *bhikkhu* at the Ghositārāma where the Buddha was residing. The *bhikkhu* is immediately suspended for not admitting the offence but later gains the support of ‘associates and companions’.⁵³ In the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* however, the incident⁵⁴ is initially brushed aside when the offending *bhikkhu* (a *Dhamma* expert, *dhammakathika*), not knowing it was an offence, agrees with his antagonist (an expert in discipline, *vinayadhara*) to correct his mistake. In this version, the suspension

⁴⁹ Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, p. 81.

⁵⁰ For an example of repetition, see S III 66-68. Antithesis is used to dramatic effect in the story of Aṅgulimāla of whom verse stanzas contrast his unrestrained evil with his renunciation, Th 867-88.

⁵¹ Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, p. 82.

⁵² Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, p. 83.

⁵³ Vin I 337, 13.

⁵⁴ A washing vessel had been left unemptied in the latrine (Dhp-a I 53-54).

of the *bhikkhu* and subsequent split in the community is the result of incitement by a disingenuous disciplinarian and subsequent recriminations. The quarrel dramatically rips through the entire community, dividing human and *deva* alike, right up to the *brahmā* world.⁵⁵

5.4.2 The Buddha intervenes

In both versions, the Buddha intervenes with a series of appeals for fraternity and virtuous monastic life.⁵⁶ However, the two camps hold separate observances and even come to blows. In a final appeal to patience and accord, the Buddha tells the story of the *Dīghiti-Kosala Jātaka*.⁵⁷ The *Mahāvagga* devotes considerable space to this story and it appears in more or less full form.

In this *jātaka*, Prince Dīghāvu attempts to avenge the death of his father, King Dīghiti, who having lost his kingdom to King Brahmadata, is forced into exile and subsequently captured, humiliated and murdered along with the queen. Having covertly gained the trust of Brahmadata, Dīghāvu becomes his courtier. But when Dīghāvu decides to enact his revenge, he remembers his father's plea to abandon enmity, as he stood bound and tormented by a baying crowd.⁵⁸ So Prince Dīghāvu spares Brahmadata's life and ends the spiral of enmity and violence. The Buddha reminds the quarrelling 'camps' of their obligation as renunciants guided by a law and discipline 'well taught' by him and to act in the world as a beacon of the qualities of gentleness and patience.⁵⁹ Yet they remain divided.

By contrast, the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* provides a much-curtailed version, emphasising the moral of Dīghāvu's story instead. Unlike the *Mahāvagga*, the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* includes the *Laṭukika Jātaka*⁶⁰ to relate how, because of a

⁵⁵ Dh-p-a I 54, 11-22.

⁵⁶ Vin I 339-40: Observance of holy days (*uposatha*), properly terminating the rainy season period (*pavāraṇā*), sharing community work (*saṃghakammaṃ*), sharing the same seats (*āsane*), sharing gruel (*yāgupāna*), living under the same roof (*ekacchanne vasati*), sharing the refectory (*bhattagga*) and performing respect to elders (*yathāvuḍḍhaṃ abhivādanaṃ paccuṭṭhānaṃ aṅjalikammaṃ sāmīcikkammaṃ*)

⁵⁷ In terms of Collins' classification of Buddhist ethics towards violence into two modes, the story fits with utopian ideals of Dhamma mode 2 in which violence is renounced by kings. In Dhamma mode 1, violence is 'context-dependent and negotiable'. *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 420.

⁵⁸ Vin I 344-5.

⁵⁹ Vin I 349, 7-8.

⁶⁰ *Jātaka* 35, J III 174-7.

quarrel, a tiny quail was able to muster enough wrath to destroy a mighty elephant. And how, in the *Vaṭṭaka Jātaka*,⁶¹ ‘many thousands of quails met their destruction because of a quarrel’. No one profits from quarrels, disputes, bickering and contentions.⁶²

5.4.3 The Buddha’s withdrawal

At this point of the story, Ghositārāma is still divided. Both versions pick up on the reaction to the Buddha’s appeals from the recalcitrant *bhikkhus*. Unable to end the quarrel, the *Mahāvagga* quotes a series of stanzas from the Buddha before his departure from the community. The verses are also found in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* and the following are a selection:

Though the Saṅgha is being split
None thinks himself to be at fault.⁶³

Bhikkhus are reminded that living in the community is an opportunity to develop mindfulness and wisdom:

Those others do not recognise
That here we should restrain ourselves.
But those wise ones who realise this
At once end all their enmity.⁶⁴

And as a prelude to his forest solitude, the story echoes a verse of self-reliance from the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*:

Better is it to walk alone,
There is no companionship with fools.
Walk alone and do no evil
At ease like a tusker in the woods.⁶⁵

Although the verses are not found in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, the latter touches upon similar themes. The Buddha reflects on his crowded (*ākiṇṇa*) conditions and

⁶¹ *Jātaka* 33, J I 208-210.

⁶² Dhp-a I 55, 14-19.

⁶³ M III 154, 2-3 = Vin I 349, 26-27. Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 1009.

⁶⁴ M III 154, 12-13 = Vin I 349, 36-37 = Dhp 6. Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 1009.

⁶⁵ M III 154, 24-25 = Vin I 350, 12-14. Translation by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 1010.

compares this with a life of solitude.⁶⁶ After taking alms, the Buddha then withdraws from his *bhikkhus* and wanders ‘all alone’ (*ekako attano*). The Buddha then has a series of encounters that re-establish harmony and fraternity in the narrative

5.4.4 Bhagu

The Buddha first meets a *bhikkhu* called Bhagu at Bālakaḷonakārāma.⁶⁷ In the *Mahāvagga*, Bhagu receives and greets the Buddha with all the usual customs and respects.⁶⁸ The commentary to the *Upakkilesa-sutta* explains that the Buddha gives Bhagu a talk on the benefits of ‘oneness’ (*ekābhāva*).⁶⁹ In the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* however, this encounter is only briefly presented, mentioning that the talk is on the ‘observance of living alone’ (*ekacārikavatta*).⁷⁰

5.4.5 At the Eastern Bamboo Park

After the Buddha leaves Bhagu, he enters the Eastern Bamboo Park where he meets a community of three *bhikkhus*. The *Mahāvagga* presents this meeting by repeating in part the same passages found in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* (see below), in which the Buddha teaches the *bhikkhus* about the benefits of living in harmony.⁷¹

After exchanging the same customary greetings observed earlier with Bhagu, the Buddha gets the three *bhikkhus* to reflect on how, through their striving together, they are able to live ‘harmoniously and cordially’ (*samaggā sammodamānā*) ‘blending like milk and water’ (*khīrodakābhūtā*), without disputing and viewing each other with the ‘eye of affection’ (*piyacakkhūhi*).

Choosing not to dwell on this scene, the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* only briefly mentions that the Buddha taught three ‘young men of good family’ (*kulaputta*)⁷² about the ‘benefits of the taste of concord’ (*sāmaggirasānisamaṣaṃ*).⁷³

⁶⁶ Dhṛp-a I 56, 15-17.

⁶⁷ It is not certain whether this is a village or a separate *ārāma*. See DPPN, s.v.

Bālakaḷonakārāma.

⁶⁸ Vin I 350, 15-29.

⁶⁹ Ps IV 206, 26-27.

⁷⁰ Dhṛp-a I 56, 20-21.

⁷¹ Vin I 350-2.

⁷² Often translated as ‘clansmen’, e.g. by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p.1010.

⁷³ Dhṛp-a I 56, 21-22.

5.4.6 At Pārileyyaka forest

After his meeting with the three *bhikkhus*, the Buddha again sets out alone, this time to a ‘protected forest thicket’ (*rakkhitavanasaṇḍa*) at Pārileyakka.⁷⁴ Here he dwells at the foot of a ‘propitious sal tree’ (*bhaddasālamūla*) accompanied and cared for by a lone elephant who formally lived hemmed in by his herd, the cow elephants and their young. At this point of the story, the canonical and non-canonical accounts differ considerably.

The *Mahāvagga* contains a brief account of the duties performed by the elephant, referencing the *Nāga-sutta* in the *Udāna*. This is followed by a further reflection by the elephant, ‘now at ease’ and away from the herd and ends with a sacred utterance from the Buddha:

The mind of this tusker agrees with the mind of that tusker:
The elephant whose tusks are as long as shafts
In the forest he delights alone.⁷⁵

The Buddha stays at Pārileyyaka for the remainder of the rains, later moving to Sāvatti. At this point, the *Mahāvagga* brings the curtain down at Pārileyyaka and returns to the situation at Ghositārāma.

By contrast, the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* devotes a great deal of narrative detail to the events in the forest, especially the elephant which, as Ohnuma notes, switches roles to a devoted attendant. Upon meeting the Buddha alone in the forest, the elephant salutes him and immediately attends to his needs, breaking a branch off a tree to fashion a broom for sweeping so that the forest can be made more suitable for the Buddha. The elephant even prepares hot water so that the Buddha can bathe.⁷⁶

The elephant serves the Buddha throughout his stay in the forest. He brings him ‘various kinds of fruits’ to eat. He accompanies him on the way to alms gathering, carrying the Buddha’s bowl on his head and patiently waiting for him at the edge of the forest. The elephant fans the Buddha with a branch of a tree and guards him at night. ‘I will protect the teacher’, the earnest beast thinks, as he patrols the forest in the night

⁷⁴ Vin I 352, 26.

⁷⁵ My translation of Vin I 353, 21-22 = Ud 42, 25-26:

*etaṃ nāgassa nāgena īsādantassa hatthino
sameti cittaṃ cittena yaṃ eko ramatī vane 'ti.*

⁷⁶ How? The commentator asks. By skilfully rubbing together firewood with his trunk to produce fire, by heating stones, dropping them into the water, checking if it is warm enough, and informing the Buddha with all proper obeisance. Dh-p-a I 58-59, 15-21.

whilst carrying a big club in his trunk. And so, that forest came to be known as the ‘Protected Forest’.⁷⁷

Unlike the *Mahāvagga*, the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* adds a monkey to the scene. Not to be outdone by the generosity and devotion of the elephant, the monkey thinks: ‘I will do something or other too!’ So he breaks off a honeycomb and places it on a banana-leaf in front of the Buddha.⁷⁸ Seeing that the honeycomb has larvae in it, the monkey carefully removes them.⁷⁹ Unable to contain his delight when the Buddha eventually eats the honeycomb, the monkey leaps and dances from branch to branch. However, he loses his footing and the branches break away leading him to fall to his death. The monkey is reborn in Tāvātimsa heaven where he reaps the reward for his piety towards the Buddha.⁸⁰

5.4.7 Laypeople’s concern

As the Buddha’s absence from the Ghositārāma looms large upon the minds of the lay supporters, they withdraw services to the bickering *bhikkhus*, hoping to force the *bhikkhus* to reconcile.⁸¹ The *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* emphasises the *bhikkhus*’

⁷⁷ Dhp-a I 59, 1-14.

⁷⁸ The *Madhyama-āgama* account of the Kosambī tale does not have a monkey in it, but as Bhikkhu Anālayo notes, a similar scene is found in the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel (MA 32 at T I 469c-471c) to the *Acchariyabbhutadhamma-sutta* (M III 119-124). See Bhikkhu Anālayo, *Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya Vol 1 & 2* (Taipei: Dharma Drum, 2011), p. 710.

⁷⁹ In the Chinese version of the story at MA 32 at T I 471a16, the Buddha was staying at the Great Forest of Vesāli (Skt. Vaiśali) and was attended to by other monks. A monkey, who first seizes the Buddha’s bowl, takes it to the top of a tree and fills it with honey. He then respectfully offers it to the Buddha who does not accept it. The monkey then removes the larvae, adds some water and offers it again to the Buddha, who then accepts it. The monkey then rejoices and departs from the scene. See Marcus Bingenheimer, *The Madhyama Āgama (Middle Length Discourses), BDK English Tripiṭaka Series, Vol. 1* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2013), p. 53.

⁸⁰ Dhp-a I 60, 6-11. As John Huntington notes in his article on Buddhist pilgrimage sites, the ‘gift of the monkey’ was recorded by the 7th Century Chinese pilgrim Xuangzang as having occurred at Vesāli and not Pārileyyaka or Kosambī. ‘Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus – A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism, Part IV’, *Orientalism* (1986), pp. 28-37. This situates this scene in line with the Chinese version of the story found in the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel. Huntington’s article also uncovers examples of artwork from Sāñcī (c. BCE 25-25 CE) depicting the same scene, and a later carving at Sārnāth (5th Century CE) that includes the monkey’s demise. Thanks to Monika Zin, I have learned that ‘gift of honey’ artwork can also be found at Amaravāti and Gandhāra. The death of the monkey is also included as one of the eight episodes of the Buddha’s life recorded in a later sculpture of the *Aṣṭamahapratiharya* at Pāla.

⁸¹ Vin I 353-34.

subsequent suffering. ‘Withering from lack of food’ (*appāhāratāya sussamānā*), they live by begging bowl alone. They then confess their faults to one another and ask the lay supporters to resume their support. Ironically the *bhikkhus* are all united in their discipline not to break the rule against wandering during the rainy season in order to seek out the Buddha and be absolved. Instead they stay ‘in discomfort’ (*dukkhena*) at Ghositārāma until the end of the rainy season.⁸²

5.4.8 The Edge of the Forest

Unlike the *Mahāvagga*, the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* devotes additional scenes at the edge of forest, as the Buddha’s solitary period draws to a close, continuing to draw out key motifs of worthy companionship.

When news spreads that the Buddha is residing at Pārileyyaka, Ānanda decides to visit him at the end of the rainy season together with five hundred *bhikkhus* eager to hear a discourse from the Buddha. Ānanda enters the forest alone but is accosted by the elephant until the Buddha explains to the elephant that Ānanda is his attendant.⁸³

Ānanda and the elephant, both sharing roles as devoted attendants of the Buddha maintain a mutual and somewhat anxious respect for each other. The elephant, fearing that Ānanda may place his robes and bowl down inappropriately in the presence of the Buddha, offers to carry them, but Ānanda declines, eager to demonstrate his experience as attendant. Tension is at once diffused through their camaraderie and shared kinship with the Buddha.

After the Buddha allows the rest of the *bhikkhus* to enter the forest, he explains that the elephant had attended all duties for him and praises his companion repeating verses from the *Nāga Vagga* of the *Dhammapada* (vv.328-330). Upon hearing this sermon, the five hundred *bhikkhus* become *arahants*.

Sadly, for the elephant, the edge of the forest would be his last encounter with the Buddha since he is unable to enter the village with his human companions. He retreats slowly with his trunk in his mouth, quietly weeping. He would have anyway, watched over the Buddha until the end of his life.⁸⁴ But, his grief is too much to bear. He dies at the edge of the forest and is reborn in Tāvātimsa heaven.

⁸² Dhp-a I 57, 5-25.

⁸³ Dhp-a I 61, 1-11.

⁸⁴ Dhp-a I 63, 15-21.

5.4.9 At Sāvatti

The story turns to Sāvatti in the Jetavana, where the Buddha arrives and later receives the quarrelling *bhikkhus*. Their imminent arrival raises trepidation and concern from the community there. In the *Mahāvagga*, the Buddha is asked by *arahant*, *bhikkhu*, *bhikkhuni* and lay person alike how the disreputable *bhikkhus* should be treated. The Buddha instructs them to treat the quarrelling *bhikkhus* by referring to the *Dhamma*.⁸⁵ Alms are to be given to both sides and materials distributed equally. Knowing that the *bhikkhus* are still bickering, they are to be housed in separate quarters, but senior *bhikkhus* should not be denied their usual privileges.⁸⁶ In the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, resistance to their arrival is voiced by the King of Kosala and the wealthy benefactor, Anāthapiṇḍika. However, the Buddha insists that the *bhikkhus* are still virtuous since they are intending to apologise for their ways.⁸⁷

5.4.10 Reconciliation

In the final narrative moments of the *Mahāvagga*, the Buddha reinstates the suspended *bhikkhus* whose supporters inform the rival camp. Together, under the instructions of the Buddha, they close the matter.⁸⁸ In the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, the Buddha reminds the *bhikkhus* of the moral of Prince Dīghāvu's story. The *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* closes by revisiting the original stanza in the *Dhammapada* at the centre of the story:

But others do not understand that we must here control ourselves;
Yet let them understand this, and straight dissensions cease.⁸⁹

Upon hearing these words, those former quarrelling *bhikkhus* attain stream entry.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Vin I 354-6: Whether it relates to monks knowing whether other monks are genuine, how nuns are to know what should be expected of other monks and how laypeople are to know whose words to approve.

⁸⁶ Vin I 356, 17-19.

⁸⁷ Dhp-a I 64, 6-8.

⁸⁸ The Buddha's advice for future disputes is that such matters are to be resolved by the mandate of a unanimous decision by the Order. Vin I 357-58.

⁸⁹ Dhp 6. Translation by Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 1*, p. 183.

⁹⁰ Dhp-a I 66, 9-10.

5.5 Intertextual references

In the *Mahāvagga* account, reference is made to two key canonical passages: the *Upakkilesa-sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya*) and *Nāga-sutta* (*Udāna*). The following is a summary of additional passages that are not mentioned in the *Mahāvagga* but reference the incident or its themes directly and indirectly.

5.5.1 Kosambiya-sutta (M I 320-25)

The ethical and social conduct of those who adopt wholesome communal qualities both openly and privately (*āvī c' eva raho ca*) is contrasted with the ‘verbal stabbing’ of the quarrelling *bhikkhus* at Kosambī. The *sutta* opens with the Buddha summoning the quarrelling *bhikkhus* and admonishing them of their behaviour. The Buddha teaches them the ‘six qualities of fraternity’ (*sārāṇīya*) that produce affection (*piya*) and respect (*garu*) and are conducive to cohesion (*saṅga*), non-dispute (*avivādāya*), concord (*sāmaggi*) and unity (*ekībhāva*).

5.5.2 Saṅghabhedaka-sutta (A II 239-40)

At Ghositārāma, the Buddha asks Ānanda if the dispute has been settled. Ānanda reports that a *bhikkhu* named Bāhiya is still intent on schism. The Buddha teaches Ānanda the four reasons why an evil *bhikkhu* (*pāpabhikkhu*) ‘delights in schism’: (i) he is immoral (*dussīla*), (ii) possesses wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhika*), (iii) adopts wrong livelihood (*micchājīva*) and (iii) is desirous of wealth (*lābha*), hospitality (*sakkāra*) and praise (*anavaññatti*).

5.5.3 Pārileyya-sutta (S III 94-99)

This *sutta* appears to be an alternative to the discourse that the Buddha gave after Ānanda and the five hundred *bhikkhus* who came to visit him at Pārileyya (as depicted in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* version). Here he teaches them about the erroneous views of self. The *sutta* begins with the Buddha leaving Ghositārāma to wander alone without informing anyone but no reason is given. Ānanda states that on such occasions the Buddha is not to be followed. The *sutta* clearly indicates that the Buddha was away for a long while.

5.5.4 Cūḷagosinga-sutta (M I 205-11)

This *sutta* makes no specific mention of the quarrel but starts almost exactly the same way as the *Upakkilesa-sutta* (and the *Mahāvagga*). Unlike in the latter, the three united *bhikkhus* are *arahats* and they reside in the Gosinga Park instead of the Eastern Bamboo Grove.⁹¹ At the conclusion of the *sutta*, a *yakkha* declares to the Buddha that he and the three *bhikkhus* are a ‘great gain’ to the *Vajjian* people. The praise is echoed by the gods of the sense sphere and up to those of the *brahmā* world.

5.6 Imagery, narrative and meaning

Although we have already encountered other passages that both critique and legitimise monastic life, it is possible that none do so as vividly as the ‘Kosambī quarrel’. The story clearly captures the challenges of maintaining unity in the group. Disputes are bound to arise in monastic communities and the Buddha’s dismay and withdrawal from his own *bhikkhus* is clearly designed to be a teaching. What better way to teach quarrelling *bhikkhus* to take stock and stop fighting is there than to show them that they are disrespecting the Buddha in continuing to argue?

However, such a straightforward yet important reading, is not the only way of interpreting this story. Simple community life is also praised with reference to a small group of harmonious *bhikkhus* as well as, I argue, the place of physical seclusion in religious community life. We can, thus, discern how the Theravāda tradition is grappling with the paradox of inhabiting ideals of renunciation — separation from suffering, and, community — maintaining fraternity and spiritual friendship. In this section I will offer interpretations of how this apparent paradox may be explained at least through narrative, if not through Buddhist doctrine or its systematic thought, where such paradoxes often appear unresolved and explanations only intimated.

5.6.1 Simplicity and renunciation

The Buddha is, *ipso facto*, untarnished by any of the worldly conditions that would normally assail an ordinary human mind. The Theravāda tradition cannot express, at

⁹¹ Apart from discussing the similarities in features that would place this *sutta* into the Kosambī narrative, Anālayo has in addition found that the Chinese parallel to this *sutta* places the events immediately after the Buddha had left the quarrelling *bhikkhus* behind at Kosambī and so linking it directly with the story. *Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya*, p. 203ff).

least through any canonical text, the idea of the Buddha's 'unhappiness' or any ordinary human emotion.⁹² Somewhat unusually however, the commentarial tradition has chosen to tell the audience of the story, as it appears in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, that the Buddha is to some extent 'unhappy' or 'tired'⁹³ with the situation at Ghositārāma:

Thereupon, unhappy because of the crowded conditions under which he lived, he reflected, 'Under present conditions I am crowded and jostled and live a life of discomfort' (*dukkha*)...suppose I were to retire (*vūpakaṭṭha*) from the haunts of men and live (*vihareyya*) a life of solitude (*eka*).⁹⁴

The word translated as 'unhappy' by Burlingame is *ukkaṇṭhita* which can also mean 'dissatisfied' or 'discontented'.⁹⁵ This word is rare in Pāli literature but where it is found, it often describes *bhikkhus* who are 'tired' of monkhood and long for intimacy or to return to married life.⁹⁶ As such, *ukkaṇṭhita* is an expression of loneliness.

In our story, however, *ukkaṇṭhita* is not connected with a return to 'worldly life'. Its application is consonant with letting go of household life at the beginning of the renunciate path. The scene therefore helps us to trace how 'wrong' solitude, as loneliness, becomes 'right' when it is orientated towards the end of suffering. This is more in keeping with how *ukkaṇṭhita* is used in the *Milindapañha*, by Nāgasena to describe Siddhattha's 'malaise' towards his cloistered life,⁹⁷ connecting the word with a deeper religious emotion. This emotion is underpinned by a sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) for going forth from the home. The desire to abandon ordinary society is underpinned by a strong religious conviction which for some ascetics is accompanied by a yearning for

⁹² The commentarial tradition is also usually quick to make this point. In his commentary to the *Nāga-sutta*, Dhammapala writes on the Kosambī story: 'For the Lord Buddhas are hit upon with difficulty, and those who, in themselves, remain untainted under all circumstances...' Ud-a 248, 7-8. Translated by Peter Masefield, *The Udāna Commentary by Dhammapāla Volume II* (PTS: Oxford, 1995).

⁹³ Elsewhere, the Buddha's 'tiredness' (*kilamatha*) is explained as purely physical (Sv II 544 13-16). Vexation (*vihesā*) is described as a teacher's response to a pupil who does not practice as instructed (Ud-a 97, 27-29).

⁹⁴ Dh-p-a I 56, 13-16. Translation by Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 1*, p. 178.

⁹⁵ CPD s.v. *ukkaṇṭhati* is derived from the Sanskrit verb root *ud-√kaṇṭh*, literally, 'to stretch out one's neck', (as in to 'cry out') and has a secondary meaning of 'long or yearn for'.

⁹⁶ The *Muṇika Jātaka*; J I 196, 19. Here, *ukkaṇṭhita* refers to the disquiet a desirous *bhikkhu* has towards a woman found in the origin story.

⁹⁷ Mil 286, 3-5: *iti so pakatiyā va ukkaṇṭhito tassā devatāya vacanena bhiyyosomattāya ubbiji saṃviji saṃvegamāpajji*.

the forest.⁹⁸ The scene serves to remind the ordinary *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* that monastic life can sometimes resemble society at large and that they must maintain the attitude of letting go of all that is *dukkha*.

A similar contrast in terminology is also found in the use of *appossukka* ('living at ease'). From the perspective of the bickering *bhikkhus*, *appossukka* is taken negatively in its literal sense as a kind of retirement,⁹⁹ and so, not associated with the goal of meditation and mental freedom: 'Reverend Sir, let the Exalted One live a life of inaction and ease in this present world'.¹⁰⁰ It is worth noting that *appossukka* also appears in the story of the Buddha's hesitation to teach, mentioned briefly in the Introduction chapter. Just as in the 'Kosambī quarrel', the former story narrates an apparent moment of tension between remaining 'at ease' (*appossukka*) and separated from society after his awakening and committing himself to teaching others. I cannot help wondering whether the story of the Buddha's solitary life at Pārileyaka provides its audience with a glimpse of what life would have been like for the Buddha if he had taken the first option. Like in the 'Kosambī quarrel', the Buddha is depicted as experiencing tiredness (*kilamatha*) and vexation (*vihesā*).¹⁰¹ One could be tempted to conclude that the Buddha's separation from the quarrelling *bhikkhus* reflects a simple and practical way to deal with the troubles of society: the natural (though less compassionate) response to a quarrel, or any tiring situation, is to just walk away and live separately.

For the ordinary *bhikkhu*, what the 'Kosambī quarrel' story might highlight is a return to the ideals of simplicity in renunciate life. The dangers of close association in groups is portrayed most clearly in large monastic settlements where *bhikkhus* jostle and struggle for power and fragment those communities. Life at Ghositārāma appears mundane, cramped and troubled. The monastic rules, although established to maintain unity, instead divide the *bhikkhus* and appear as impediments to spiritual life.¹⁰² Even in the small hermitage at the Eastern Bamboo Park, meditating *bhikkhus* are not free of their social and communal obligations. Yet, theirs is a simple living in close association but based on mutual concerns for both their own and their companions' welfare. A number

⁹⁸ As in the case of many ascetics in the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*, such as Tālapuṭa (Th 1092) and Subhā (Thī 339).

⁹⁹ CPD s.v. *appossukka* as 'careless', 'unconcerned', 'inactive'.

¹⁰⁰ Dh-p-a I 55, 21-22. Translation by Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 1*, p. 177.

¹⁰¹ Vin I 5, 4-6: *ahañ c'eva kho pana dhammaṃ deseyyaṃ pare ca me na ājāneyyūṃ, so mam' assa kilamatho, sā mam' assa vihesā 'ti*.

¹⁰² According to the *Mv*, the quarrel begins over a transgression (*āpatti*) in monastic rules.

of chores that they perform together in silence around the settlement are listed: cleaning after eating together and maintaining the refectory and latrine. Their spiritual striving is one of kindly, cooperative and selfless shared abiding.¹⁰³ The value of simpler and smaller communities is reflected elsewhere in another story of quarrelling *bhikkhus*. This time, the Buddha quashes the quarrel early on but later, they are allowed to return to him alone or in pairs for a comprehensive teaching.¹⁰⁴ Yet even more sublime than the smaller forest community is the silence of the Buddha's solitude at Pārileyaka forest. Here, life in the forest is unencumbered by rules and obligations that govern how *bhikkhus* should treat each other. Instead, it is sealed by a silent acknowledgment of sanctity between kindred spirits that transcends all rules and codes.

5.6.2 Wandering and the path

Even though the story as presented in the *Mahāvagga* is built up from references to other canonical passages, there is a congruity in how the events of each scene work together as a narrative. We could say that the story moves between three levels of human life: the mundane and painful, the supramundane/*nibbāna* and harmonious community. *Nibbāna* is reflected in the harmony and comfort of the 'protected forest'. In this sense, *nibbāna* is not what Collins called the 'full stop' of stories about felicity that appear elsewhere in the Pāli imaginaire. We might, however, conceive of *nibbāna* in the stilling of hatred and division and in the restoration fraternal relations at the story's dénouement. Although community life is contrasted with wandering freely, it is only a community that is conditioned by unwholesome factors that is plainly detrimental to the renouncer. The Buddha, who becomes a temporary solitary figure in the story, can reasonably be seen to inspire the ideal *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* who freely wanders between more spiritually fruitful environments.

If we take the story at face value, it might just be narrating a hiatus in the Buddha's life. However, at a prescriptive level, I suggest there are several ways the story connects with other teachings which praise not only the Buddha's seclusion but also seclusion as part of renunciate life in general. If we can accept that the fragmented community appears to represent *saṃsāra*, then it is not unreasonable to expect that a valid response is to abandon the source of suffering. Not only is the imagery consonant with the act of going

¹⁰³ Vin I 352, 7-20 (M III 157, 8-20).

¹⁰⁴ S III 91-94.

forth that I mentioned earlier, it is also supported by other passages that appear to maintain the Buddha's solitude whilst recommending physical seclusion to his *bhikkhus* as a remedial and appropriate response to the causes of suffering in large monastic settings.¹⁰⁵

The Buddha's interaction with people/beings draws attention to the transformation implied in the narrative movement from fragmented communities to fraternity and unity, from unwholesome speech to silence and from unwise to wise companionship. Whilst the story has been used to highlight the Buddha's 'frustration', his withdrawal and movement more plainly implicate the thoughts, speech and action of others in the story.¹⁰⁶ The Buddha does not stay with either Bhagu or at the Bamboo Park and form an alternative idealised community. Unlike the unvirtuous *bhikkhus* who are literally 'stuck' in the unsatisfactory conditions at Ghositārāma, the Buddha as an ideal renouncer instead 'moves' between monastery and forest and dwells contented in either.

The crowded monastery is clearly representative of *saṃsāra* and is ultimately no different to worldly life which is tiresome for the renouncer. Whilst the narrative movement is suggestive of the potential for personal happiness and realisation, there is also the preservation of saṃsāric life in the world he leaves behind. Notions of the equivalence of Buddhist cosmology and psychology¹⁰⁷ are discernible in the story if we include the animal realm in this correspondence. In the forest, animals display skilful 'human' mind-states such as faith or trust (see below), kindness, patience, concentration and dexterity. Human activity (at Ghositārāma) is characterised by greed (or clinging to views), hatred (or the absence of friendship) and delusion (in ignoring the Buddha's advice). They live in great hardship (*dukkhena*) until the end of the rainy season.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ See the *Mahāsuññata-sutta*, e.g. M III 110, 23-28. See also A IV 435-38 both discussed in section 1.4.3. There is also A V 133-34 discussed in section 2.5.2.

¹⁰⁶ In this sense, we can compare the story to the *Cātuma-sutta* (M I 457-62), where the Buddha dismisses five hundred noisy *bhikkhus* rather than withdrawing from them. In the *Milindapañha*, Nāgasena explains that they were dismissed on account of their own actions not because of the Buddha's ill temper. Just as the ocean is free from approval or disgust even when it pushes out a corpse onto dry land, so too, is the Buddha free from ill-temper or delight, Mil 187-88. See I. B. Horner, *Milinda's Questions Part 1* (London: PTS, 1969), pp. 265-66.

¹⁰⁷ See for example, Collins, *Buddhist Felicities*, p. 304ff and Gethin, *Foundations*, p. 119ff.

¹⁰⁸ Dhṛp-a I 57: *satthu santikaṃ gantum avisahantā dukkhena taṃ antovassaṃ vītināmesuṃ*

According to the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, they are brought to a ‘better state of mind’ (*ujukā hutvā*) after they recognise their faults.¹⁰⁹

Ohnuma interprets the story as a deliberate ‘manipulation’ of animal-human categories to remind the audience of their ‘humanity’.¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, it seems to me that ‘humanity’ is never really put into question. At worst, the quarrelling *bhikkhus* begin to resemble *petas*, or hungry ghosts by becoming ‘famished’ (*appāharata*) and ‘withered’ from thirst (*sussamāna*) when the laypeople withdraw support. Despite their harmful speech, physical and mental acts of hatred, the *bhikkhus* humanity is maintained in the recognition of their errors, eventual agreement to rules and in their spiritual attainment. This is most prominent at the dénouement of the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* version when the Buddha dismisses calls from the king of Kosala to ban the quarrelling *bhikkhus* from entering Sāvatti. ‘They are virtuous (*sīlavantā*), oh king...let them enter’,¹¹¹ the Buddha replies. Indeed, at the end the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* version, all the former quarrelling *bhikkhus* attain stream entry upon hearing the Buddha’s words on self-control.¹¹²

If the overall story narrates restitution of spiritual life, the imagery of the Buddha’s wandering from Ghositārāma appears to narrate a more rewarding enterprise for those who remain confident in the Buddha’s example and seek out a simpler lifestyle based on meditation. The small Arcadian community that is peaceful, stable and friendly appears in this story in between the large crowded monastery and the sublime solitude of the forest. The scene highlights that community does not neglect meditative life. Even when there are problems and disappointments with meditation, community cohesion and fraternity is still maintained. What may also be discerned from this scene is that such communities not only provide favourable conditions for personal realisation for a renouncer, they appear to mediate between the saṃsāric conditions of the fragmented monastery and the nibbānic imagery of the forest. The Buddha’s wandering surely, speaks more of a more symbolic sense of solitariness. As *ekāyana*, not only does the imagery of physical withdrawal and independence suggest a ‘lonely’ or ‘narrow’ path’, it also speaks of a ‘single path’ that leads ineluctably to one place.

¹⁰⁹ Dhp-a I 57, 17. Translation by Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 1*, p. 178, but *ujukā* usually relates to *diṭṭhi* and may be better translated as ‘straightened view’.

¹¹⁰ Ohnuma, *An Elephant Good to Think*, p. 279.

¹¹¹ My translation of Dhp-a I 64, 6-7. *mahārāja sīlavantā te...āgacchanti*.

¹¹² Dhp-a I 66, 9-10.

5.6.3 Seclusion and silence

From the *Upakkilesa-sutta*, we can discern a contrast or antithesis (A//A' pattern) between *bhikkhus* who quarrel and those who live harmoniously in the idyllic arcadia of the Eastern Bamboo Park. Here, the three *bhikkhus* have overcome their desires and live together cordially and unburdened. However, in the story as presented in the *Mahāvagga/Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, the same contrasting events are encased in another pair of opposing elements which contrast division at the beginning of the story with unity and restitution at its dénouement. At the centre of this pattern of concentric contrasting elements we find the Buddha's seclusion in the 'protected forest'. We can therefore summarise the chiasmic structure of the narrative as follows:

A Disagreement, disorder and suffering

B Withdrawal from a fragmented community

C Solitude & silence

-B Togetherness and teaching to a united community

-A Restitution, order and spiritual reward

The commentator has not only adopted the canonical narrative pattern, he has adapted it for dramatic effect and embellished the story's central scene. In the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* version, there is a lack of speech and a paucity of information about the forest; its sounds, features and impressions are left to the readers'/listeners' imagination.¹¹³ Instead the audience is shown how the Buddha lives in comfort and without fear through the elephant's actions.

To some, the Buddha's solitude in the company of the lone elephant may appear unfair and imbalanced rather than as either kinship or unity. Indeed, compared to the

¹¹³ The *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* adds greater detail to the forest allowing its audience to rest on its beauty as a *locus amoenus*: 'From there he went to Pāralīya forest, full of mangoes, *Jambu* fruits, and bananas. This forest was traversed by elephants, horses, bears, and such beasts, inhabited by parrots, peacocks, and other birds, and haunted by *siddha* and *vidyādhara* deities. There were hundreds of ponds and lakes that were filled with water and constantly in motion, for they were stirred by the breasts of celestial nymphs bathing in them.' Translated by Obeyesekere, *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*, p. 114-5.

elephant, the Buddha may appear pampered and ordinary. The Buddha could be seen in this view, to have taken the advice of his quarrelling *bhikkhus*, for all intents and purposes and be ‘less eager’ (*apossuko*) by abandoning them and their situation for the peace and serenity of the forest. However, through showing rather than telling that, as I shall presently discuss, both monastic and lay audience learn and benefit from the elephant’s character. Whilst the elephant’s actions demonstrate the rewards of generosity to virtuous renouncers, from the perspective of the Buddha, they also silently narrate how liberated beings live free from suffering.

The only incongruity is the death of the monkey that appears to tarnish the image of nibbānic bliss. Yet through humour and pathos, we are informed that there are great rewards in companionship with the noble and virtuous. The scene at Pārileyaka transcends the Eastern Bamboo Park since, in the former, not only speech is muted, all human companionship is absent. Upon hearing of the Buddha’s solitude, the quarrelling *bhikkhus* acknowledge the errors of their speech and actions.¹¹⁴ Apprehended this way, the forest scene, therefore, acts as a fulcrum upon which the story turns towards teaching and uniting communities together with spiritual rewards.

The story’s imagery is also suggestive of a play in the layers of seclusion that is reminiscent of the *Cūḷasuññata-sutta*. The latter starts with the idea of emptying of crowded places juxtaposed with a concrete description of the forest where there is both physical and psychological seclusion. At Ghositārāma, the Buddha describes his former abiding as *dukkha*. Alone in the Pārileyaka forest, *dukkha* is replaced with *sukha*. The effect of the forest as a soothing balm to his tiredness and vexation speaks of the therapeutic benefit of *kāyaviveka* before any transformative psychological effects of *cittaviveka*. The Arcadian dwelling of the three *bhikkhus* in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* is a secluded setting, quiet and away from people. In their cloistered but small communal setting, the *bhikkhus* seek out their ‘own welfare’ (*attakāmarūpa*).¹¹⁵ Their individual spiritual endeavour is totally compatible with their togetherness. The three *bhikkhus* approach all aspects of their small community life ‘diligent, ardent and resolute’. Unable to maintain ‘light (*obhāso*) and vision of forms’ (*dassanañ ca rūpānaṃ*) in their meditation, the Buddha teaches them what he himself did and what they must do to

¹¹⁴ Dh-p-a I 57, 17-18.

¹¹⁵ When the Buddha first approaches the Park, he is told by the Park Keeper, ‘There are three clansmen here seeking their own good. Do not disturb them.’ M III 155, 17-18.

overcome them in their training.¹¹⁶ In doing so, the narrative shifts to the experience of meditation and overcoming the hindrances to awakening.

Whilst the Buddha's wandering speaks of *kāyaviveka*, notions of *cittaviveka* can be traced in the stillness of the Buddha's forest abiding where there is calm, quiet and mindful presence. I suggest that the scene brings to mind two key themes that we have encountered earlier. Firstly, the contrast in settings compares harmful speech to the silence of the forest.¹¹⁷ The scene speaks of the simple rule that *bhikkhus* who congregate should either discuss matters of *Dhamma* or practice noble silence.¹¹⁸ Secondly, it reminds a *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* that the Buddha's own seclusion does not just serve as a 'pleasant abiding' for himself. It also inspires them to follow his example and do the same and, I suggest, is a reminder that repeated and frequent meditative withdrawal is necessary to free oneself from the everyday experience of *samsāra*.

Again, forest asceticism is not expurgated by, what Ray and others might consider, the routinised, institutionally driven worldview of fifth century commentators. Instead, in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, the forest is embellished as a place of peace and where silence and seclusion are imaginatively maintained as important values alongside friendship and community. It is true that the Buddha is not alone in the usual sense, but the scene is both simple and outlandish and makes its point so effectively. It is better to be alone than have unwholesome companions, and that the Buddha is the best and perfect kind of companion.

The reference to the Udāna in the *vinaya* version of the story clearly foregrounds the importance ascetic endeavour. The Buddha holds a special regard for the elephant as one like him, who 'delights in solitude'.¹¹⁹ The elephant has already given up his own 'crowded' life and is quite free of any bonds to community or authority. In the other story mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, we noted how the Buddha patiently endures abuse like an elephant engaged in battle.¹²⁰ It is only a tamed (*danta*) elephant that is led into battle just as it is only the well-trained *bhikkhu* whose conduct is 'best among

¹¹⁶ M III 158-62.

¹¹⁷ I should add that what is contrasted here need not be harmful speech and no speech, since not speaking up and dispensing *Dhamma* is discouraged, A II 52, 29-32.

¹¹⁸ E.g. M I 161, 31-33 and Ud 31, 16-18.

¹¹⁹ Vin I 353, 21-22 = Ud 42, 25-26.

¹²⁰ Dhṛ 320:

*ahaṃ nāgo va saṃgāme cāpāto patitaṃ saraṃ
atīvākyam titikkhissam dussīlo hi bahujjano.*

men'.¹²¹ The elephant symbolises heedfulness (*appamāda*) associated with guarding the sense-doors and with the self-reliance required to extricate oneself from the mire of defilement.¹²²

The Kosambī narrative not only draws a *bhikkhu*'s attention towards the experience of their training, it also brings a glimpse of its fulfilment. The silent companionship in the forest is presented as a sublime setting in which solitary life is free from fear and anxiety. From the presence and actions of the elephant, the audience learns that the forest is at once dangerous but safe, harsh but comfortable, spartan but plentiful. The Buddha, as forest ascetic, sleeps at ease during the night and dwells untroubled during the day. In the forest, this experience is narrated through the companionship of a kindred spirit. Here, liberated beings dwell protected and unencumbered by the usual emotional and material needs of the crowd — they are plainly never 'lonely' or 'fearful' in their solitude.

Although the imagery of the elephant speaks of an important ascetic dimension to the story, the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* version shows that it should not be merely taken as a trope for an *arahant*.¹²³ Unlike the other (human) characters, in the story, the elephant is unable to reap the same spiritual rewards as them. The elephant, in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* version, does not necessarily represent ascetic vigour and the potential for enlightenment, but rather, as the Buddha explains, the qualities of the ideal religious companion:

Monks, the elephant Pārileyaka fulfilled all my obligations. By obtaining such a companion, one is properly engaged to live alone; even when [such a companion] is not obtained, it is better to be one who wanders alone.¹²⁴

Like this elephant, such ones are resourceful, fearless, skilled and earnest. From the *vinaya*, this wild animal fulfils his longing for peace in the forest. And from the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, only after he demonstrates his trust and friendship in the Buddha is he rewarded. The death of the elephant (and monkey) and his separation from

¹²¹ Dh 321:

*dantaṃ nayanti samitiṃ dantaṃ rājābhirūhat
danto seṭṭho manussesu yo 'tivākyaṃ titikkhati.*

¹²² Dh 327:

*appamādaratā hotha, sacittam anurakkhatha,
duggā uddharath' attānaṃ paṃke sanno va kuñjaro*

¹²³ As the imagery of an elephant might usually suggest. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, p. 1756 n. 1317.

¹²⁴ Dh-a I 61-2. Translation by Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 1*, p. 181.

the Buddha, perhaps speaks of how *nibbāna* is non-social in that it is aloof of the realities of impermanence and death of mundane social life.

The behaviour of the animals in *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* version is neither extraordinary nor particularly straightforward. The elephant is strong, intelligent and dependable and the monkey is careless and clumsy. Yet both display skill, dexterity and, in particular, a ‘desire-to-do’ borne of confidence in their perception of the Buddha’s sanctity.¹²⁵ What I suggest the story does most effectively is allow the animals to silently speak for themselves. In the absence of humans, there are only the thoughts and deeds of good companions. Unlike humans, the minds of animals, as it is said elsewhere in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, are transparent and predictable:

Animals, they say, are straightforward and not given to deceit; men however, think one thing in their heart, but say another with their lips. Therefore, said the Exalted One to a monk. ‘The ways of men are past finding out, but the ways of beasts are easy to discover’.¹²⁶

In the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* narrative, devotion and friendship are expressed without the need for dialogue until Ānanda and the other *bhikkhus* arrive. The ethics of speech and the motif of silence are undoubtedly important principles cleverly played out through the inclusion of animals.

This silence contrasts with all speech at Ghositārāma. Harsh words accompany accusations. Slander leads to further bickering and brawls. The dialogue between rival factions demonstrates how malicious speech creates ‘disunity from unity’.¹²⁷ The Buddha’s own words are shown to be ineffective. Divisive speech is used to ‘reject’ the Buddha’s appeals by a certain ‘unrighteous’ speaking (*adhammavādī*) *bhikkhu* who appears to revel in his notoriety.¹²⁸ The Buddha is unable to unite his *bhikkhus* at every stage of the narrative prior to his wandering. His appeals for cohesion for the sake of shared observance of holy days have no effect on the *bhikkhus* who fail to recognise their wrongdoing.¹²⁹ As a portent of future cataclysmic effects of quarrelling in the *Saṅgha*,

¹²⁵ This kind of desire is usually attributed to the Pāli word *chanda*. It is listed as part of a series of activities experienced by a lay person who has *saddhā* or trustful confidence in a *bhikkhu* whose mind is purified. Each activity supports the next culminating in a realisation or an ‘awakening of truth’ (*saccānubodha*); M II 171-73.

¹²⁶ The commentary to Dhṃ vv. 21-23 at Dhṃ-a II 173, 2-6. Translation by Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 1*, p. 255.

¹²⁷ M III 48, 6-10.

¹²⁸ Vin I 349, 15-16

¹²⁹ Vin I 339-40.

the Buddha uses a *Jātaka* tale that relates how many thousands of quails met their destruction because of a quarrel.¹³⁰ But his words fall on deaf ears.

The narrative seems to respond to this hiatus by turning to the role of silence and backgrounding speech such as the peace and quiet of the Eastern Bamboo Grove, which emphasises harmony and accord. The three *bhikkhus* explain that whenever they resort to communication in daily life, it is by gesture and not by speech.¹³¹ The remainder of this scene is focussed on their unity (*sāmaggi*) both in community and meditative practice.

5.6.4 Individual and community ethics

According to Ray, the teacher ‘plays a crucial role in a prospective forest saint’s journey’.¹³² But whilst the Buddha is, *prima facie*, temporarily silenced in this story, his teaching is not. Through the Buddha’s wandering, the story draws attention to the value of self-reliance. The narrative therefore preserves the Buddha’s status of teacher through ‘showing’ rather than ‘telling’.¹³³ As an exposition of the *Dhammapada* verses 328-30 quoted above, (‘wander alone unless you find a wise companion’), the Buddha’s withdrawal clearly echoes the need for solitude as part of renunciate life expressed in the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*. For the Buddha’s forest companions, his presence alone is enough to arouse devotion and a ‘desire-to-do’. Their actions tell us that the highest kind of companionship is that of an enlightened being; the most perfect kind being a *buddha*.

The Buddha’s interlude at Pārileyyaka has given the authors of the commentary to the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* much leeway to embellish the story with the notion of tranquillity and trust (or faith) in certain social contexts. The elephant is totally devoted and obedient to the Buddha, paying him regular homage (*vandati*) and obeying his instruction not to follow him when the Buddha wishes to travel alone. According to the commentary to the *Nāga-sutta*, the elephant is said to have gained a ‘clarified’ or ‘trustful heart/mind’ (*pasannacitta*)¹³⁴ upon first encountering the Buddha. Happiness follows one

¹³⁰ Dh-p-a I 55, 17-18.

¹³¹ Whoever notices that the pots of water...are low or empty takes care of them. If they are too heavy for him, he calls someone else by a signal of the hand...because of this we do not break out into speech. M III 157, 12-16.

¹³² Ray, *Buddhist Saints in India*, p. 85.

¹³³ I am grateful to Naomi Appleton for pointing this out.

¹³⁴ Ud-a 250. The term *pasanna* is the past participle of *pasīdati* from which the noun *pasāda* (Skt. *prasāda*) is formed and which connotes faith or trustful confidence. Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, p. 115).

who speaks or acts with a ‘trustful heart’.¹³⁵ As much as this tells us about the elephant’s present psychological state as a devoted companion, it also reminds us of its equivalence in Buddhist cosmology. Those whose *citta* is ‘trustful’, just as the elephant and monkey, are also said to attain a heavenly rebirth upon death.¹³⁶ Their demise is consistent with how animals in Buddhist stories can be liberated from the animal realm through the presence of a spiritually attained human.¹³⁷ The actions of the elephant and the monkey also serve to chime with lay audiences who sympathise with and applaud their acts of devotion. In empathising with these characters, the audience performs a meritorious mental action (*puñña*) themselves.¹³⁸

Further events help to make the connection between community cohesion and merit-making. At the edge of the forest, when the Buddha attempts to leave with his retinue for the first time, he decides to stay for the sake of the elephant. ‘Monks, he desires to give alms to you. He is a long-time helper of mine. It would not be right to break his heart. Turn back monks!’¹³⁹ The elephant then offers alms to the Buddha and the five hundred *bhikkhus*. Here the story places emphasis on the merit to be gained from serving an entire retinue of *arahants* as opposed to one *buddha*.¹⁴⁰ At the Eastern Bamboo Park, the presence of the three *bhikkhus* living harmoniously in their small community is praised and their practise recognised as being for the ‘good, welfare and benefit of gods and humans’.¹⁴¹ By contrast, the rejected *bhikkhus* who had precipitated the Buddha’s

¹³⁵ DhP 2.

¹³⁶ A I 8-9.

¹³⁷ See Appleton and Shaw, *Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha*, p. 78-79, n. 47. In his in-depth study into the role of *prasāda* in the *Dvīyāvādāna*, Andy Rotman argues that *prasāda* is a mental state that arises from sensory contact within social realms almost exclusively through sight, and, as a ‘force’ through which beings can escape their karmic destiny. *Thus I Have Seen: Visualizing Faith in Early Indian Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 67 and p.89. See also Reiko Ohnuma, *Unfortunate Destiny: Animals in the Indian Buddhist Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). Ohnuma describes the process by which faithful animals gain a better rebirth as a ‘cosmic loophole’, (p.28).

¹³⁸ Harvey, *Introduction to Buddhism*, p. 65.

¹³⁹ DhP-a I 62, 20-24. Translation by Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 1*, p. 182.

¹⁴⁰ This point is made much more overtly to a lay audience by Dharmasēna Thera in the *Saddharmaratnāvalīya*: ‘The merit he gains for the services he renders you are much greater than what he gains from that which he has done for me. For you are the Saṅgha, the monastic Order’. Translation by Obeyesekere, *Saddharmaratnāvalīya*, p. 119.

¹⁴¹ M I 211: Here the *bhikkhus* are resident at Gosinga Park and not in the Eastern Bamboo Grove as in the *Upakkilesa-sutta*. They are also fully attained *arahants* unlike in the latter.

absence are neither worthy of worship nor, by implication, a source of merit, at least until their faith in the Buddha is restored.¹⁴²

Merit is related to attainment and *a fortiori* to cohesion in the *Saṅgha* where greater merit is derived from a community of *bhikkhus* that are unified in harmony and fraternity. Gaining merit does not just apply to the five hundred *arahats*. According to a parallel story in the *Cuḷagosinga-sutta*, the same three *bhikkhus* of the *Upakkilesa-sutta* are heralded as a ‘great gain’ (*suladdhalābha*) to the community – in this case, the people of the Vajjī country. Again, in sharp contrast to the *bhikkhus* at Ghositārāma who divide both human and Brahmā realms, praise of the small community of meditative *bhikkhus* is echoed by the gods of the sense sphere and up to those of the Brahmā world.¹⁴³ The above events reiterate how prudent companionship (*nipaka sahāya*) and wholesome monastic relations uphold the Buddha’s teachings in his absence.

Even if it is the attachment to certain rules that triggers division in the story, monastic regulations are not undermined. New rules to deal with disagreements are created and form a prominent part of the resolution of *Mahāvagga* account. In doing so, important *vinaya* principles of cohesion and unity that maintain the *Saṅgha* as a community are reinforced. Whilst salient qualities inherent to the *Saṅgha* are learned through intertextual reference to the *Saṅghabhedaka-sutta*, the key qualities of self-restraint and non-hatred are most apparent in the re-telling of the *Dīghiti-Kosala Jātaka*. Its depiction breathes life into the systematic thought behind the ethics of wholesome and unwholesome action as encapsulated in verse 6 of the *Dhammapada* and uttered by the Buddha before his withdrawal. Despite losing his father and inheritance to the sword of King Brahmadatta, Dīghāvu chooses peace and reconciliation instead of revenge. Dīghāvu restrains his impulsive thoughts from precipitating into vengeance. His own dispute is clearly settled ‘internally’ through skilful mental qualities rather than ‘externally’ through violence.¹⁴⁴ The imagery of ‘pursuit’, ‘deception’ and ‘scheming’ are options that can only bind a *bhikkhu* to *samsāra* and prevent true renunciation. Although the story has no effect on the quarrelling *bhikkhus*, they remind the monastic audience of important monastic virtues that unify the *Saṅgha*. For the lay audience who

¹⁴² Dhp-a I 57, 5-25.

¹⁴³ M I 210-11.

¹⁴⁴ Vin I 341-8 and Dhp-a I 56.

applaud Dīghavu's wholesome action, they are given another opportunity to empathise in meritorious acts.

The Buddha's wandering through alternative settings with positive connotations appears to represent communities that foreground the natural qualities of the ordinary renouncer and preserve the importance of communal life. In the *Mahāvagga*, the solitary *bhikkhu* Bhagu receives the Buddha, prepares a seat and bathes his feet. The Buddha then asks Bhagu if he is living comfortably and Bhagu confirms that he does.¹⁴⁵ By mentioning the customary greetings and respects paid by Bhagu towards the Buddha, the narrative shows that social norms between elders are not neglected by those following a solitary life.¹⁴⁶ The motif of shared community is most apparent in the small fraternity of three *bhikkhus* in the Eastern Bamboo Grove. They practise loving-kindness in speech, thought and deed both openly and privately and live selflessly. Their harmonious communal life is compatible with their quiet application of meditative effort. Differences between community members are no impediment to social life or to meditative attainment: 'We are different in body but one in mind.'¹⁴⁷ In a related passage, of the six principles of cordiality that is most cohesive (*saṅgāhikaṃ*) and unifying (*saṅghātanikaṃ*) is the view of what leads to liberation and destruction of all *dukkha*.¹⁴⁸ In the forest, the Buddha, reflects on how his own mind and the mind of the elephant chime together (*sameti cittaṃ cittena*) in their shared delight of seclusion. Instead of being a place of social isolation, the forest is symbolic not only of meditative effort, but of fraternity and kinship. It is a place that unifies *bhikkhus* in the overall ascetic aim of abstaining from evil; a connection that is absent at Ghositārāma.

The Buddha's movement through idealised communities foregrounds intertwined themes related to both self-realisation and community: seclusion, self-restraint, trustful devotion, respect for teachers, loving-kindness, concord, mutual appreciation and patience. As such, the story appears to balance notions of community with individual commitment to the escape from suffering

In her exploration of the story, Ohnuma highlights how, at the border between the village and forest, a group of visiting *bhikkhus* are prevented from seeing the Buddha. The scene serves to remind the audience how the imagery is another play on the

¹⁴⁵ Vin I 350, 14-28.

¹⁴⁶ See section 5.4.4 on how Bhagu's presence in the narrative draws attention to solitude.

¹⁴⁷ Vin I 351, 33 (M III 156, 27): *no bhante kāyā ekañ ca pana maññe cittaṃ ti*.

¹⁴⁸ M I 322-23.

difference between ‘animalistic humans’ and animals.¹⁴⁹ Not only the quarrelling *bhikkhus*, but any group or community of humans symbolically play the role of ‘animalistic humans.’ Ohnuma’s claim seems difficult to justify if we consider the other communities as additional narrative events in the story.¹⁵⁰ Their inclusion seems more relevant to a story of restoring community and draws attention to thoughts and deeds that unify renouncers with a common purpose. I would suggest that the Buddha’s absence from the monastery appears to foreground the presence of more wholesome spiritual companions in every other community he encounters. Regardless of whether the animals in this story represent a human ideal, as long as certain skilful human qualities are present, no other religious community really matters in connection to the goal.

In this story, the imagery of solitude and community reinforce each other. Meditative seclusion inferred in the Buddha’s wandering and separation strengthens a *bhikkhu*’s capacity to live patiently and with compassion towards others. The overall arc of restoring community and harmony pivots on the narrative silence of *nibbāna*. The forest certainly has a central role in a similar way to the *Vessantara Jātaka*. As Sarah Shaw notes, the forest in this *jātaka* is a sanctum for Prince Vessantara and his family before he gives up his children only to be reunited with them.¹⁵¹ In the Kosambī story, the forest is where support and friendship are nurtured along with other qualities so that, when alone, need not be lonely.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have asked why the story of ‘Kosambī quarrel’ is told in the way it is. At a basic level, the story makes a straightforward point about *saṃsāra* for unenlightened *bhikkhus*. Quarrelling and division in the monastic community are potential manifestations of the reality of *dukkha*. The ineffectiveness of the Buddha to resolve the dispute narrates that even his teachings are somehow impermanent in the world and how the degeneration of the *Saṅgha* appears inevitable. A divisive *bhikkhu* would clearly learn that they would displease their teachers and risk creating a schism. From the perspective of an ordinary *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhunī* who might not be interested in a

¹⁴⁹ Ohnuma, *An Elephant Good to Think*, p. 275.

¹⁵⁰ Ohnuma describes the Buddha’s visit to the three *bhikkhus*, along with his meeting with Bhagu, as one of ‘two brief intermediate episodes’. *An Elephant Good to Think*, p. 261.

¹⁵¹ Appleton and Shaw, *Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha*, p. 528.

historical reading, I suggest that the story speaks of a paradox between notions of community and solitude. I have sought to illuminate the imagery of the Buddha's wandering away from a divisive community and solitude how they might connect with aspects of meditative quiet, individual retreat and self-reliance. The forest appears alongside two other kinds of dwelling place: large monastic communities and small hermitages focused on meditation and solitary life. Given the truth of *dukkha* and the potential consequences of division, the large community represents *samsāra*. We may conceive the small hermitage as representing a shift in a *bhikkhu*'s path through meditation towards gradual independence from the teacher and hence a crucial marking point in his path. The forest as an image of *nibbāna* appears as the *bhikkhu*'s true spiritual home. This seems to be the perspective of the *Nāga-sutta*, in which the 'crowded' monastery is contrasted with the peace of the forest. When the monastic community comes into a conflict, it resembles ordinary *samsāric* society at large. I suggest that the Buddha's withdrawal serves to remind a *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* how physical seclusion is spoken of in some strands of texts as appropriate and continuous with the notion of renunciation as abandoning the causes of *dukkha*.

Whilst differences between the canon and commentary might point to a tangible historical change in attitude towards the emphasis on forest practice, I have tried to show how themes of independence and community nevertheless overlap. I have suggested that the sequence of this narrative presents the Buddha's solitude at the centre of a chiasmic structure of contrasting elements. As such, the forest appears as a fulcrum allowing the redactors of the *Mahāvagga* and *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* to narrate the resolution of conflict and the restoration of unity in the *Saṅgha* in their own way. In the *Mahāvagga*, formerly divided *bhikkhus* agree to follow monastic rules and in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, they gain insight into the futility of their former ways and share in spiritual rewards.

In the forest scene described in the in *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, the elephant as the Buddha's attendant forms part of a simpler community. Apart from Ānanda, the Buddha had seven attendants in his lifetime.¹⁵² It is tempting to add the *nāga* at *Pārileyaka* as an honorary member of this list. However, this does not necessarily

¹⁵² According to the *Udāna* commentary, they were: *Nāgasamāla*, *Nāgita*, *Upavāna*, *Sunakkhatta*, *Cunda*, *Sāgata* and *Meghiya*, Ud-a 217, 12-18.

downplay the value of forest-dwelling. The scene cleverly draws attention to spiritual qualities required to live skilfully in the world.

The elephant as the ideal ascetic speaks of those who have the resolve and energy to practice apart from others if necessary and wander freely, like the Buddha. They are like *nāgas*, who withdraw from the crowd and develop qualities to endure the slings and arrows of discordant community life. The *nāga* at Pārileyaka, therefore, imaginatively plays the part of both ideal ascetic and Buddha's attendant. The dual role of the *nāga* provides a bridge to Buddhist concepts described by more formulaic or systematic expressions of religious thought that conceives both solitude and fraternity as parts of a complex of practices.

The silence of the Buddha's non-human companions in the forest provides a glimpse of what life might have been like if the Buddha decided not to teach. In the forest, the teaching of *Dhamma* is absent. Yet, merit can still be made as illustrated by the devotional acts and the heavenly destinations of the elephant and the monkey. Their limited rewards serve to remind his *bhikkhus/bhikkhunīs* that as devoted followers of the teacher, they can go further, and, that the Buddha's example and his teachings prescribe the way that they can.

I have taken a relatively understudied story of the Buddha's solitude to show how the Theravāda tradition has tried to narrate a paradox in the life of an ordinary *bhikkhu*. It is easy to understand that from reading the story that maintaining unity and order in the *Saṅgha* must have been a real concern for its redactors. I have found that the story narrates a variety of themes that we have encountered throughout this study. A *bhikkhu/bhikkhunī* can at times withdraw from the noisy crowd but also be a caring and supportive member of a community that gains sanctity as much from rules as from the presence of shared virtues. These values bring strong, caring and united communities that in turn help sustain healthy and productive individual periods alone.

Conclusion

*Here are roots of trees. Here are deserted houses.
Meditate, monks! Do not later have regrets.
This is my instruction to you.¹*

Whereas much discussion about solitude in Pāli source texts has been concerned with the extent to which the practice of forest-dwelling and meditation have varied in the history of Buddhist monasticism, my goal has been to uncover the prescriptive value of solitude in the Buddhist path. I have tried to demonstrate how solitude embraces a range of nuanced, complementary and, as yet, not fully appreciated interrelated concepts related to renunciation, physical and mental seclusion and self-reliance/independence voiced through a cross-section of sources. One particularly prominent concept within this facet of the *nikāyas* is forest-dwelling, linked to longer periods of physical seclusion from the community by, ostensibly, more ascetic types of monks and nuns or *ārañṇakas*, as a sustained practice of mental seclusion, or concentration. However, I have adduced evidence that suggests how the term *ārañṇaka* more strikingly applies to all newly ordained monastics engaged in the gradual path. Support for this ideal can be traced in prescriptions for physical seclusion found in several formulae that stem from some key sources and that are repeated across the *nikāyas* as one aspect of the gradual path.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, whilst the Pāli Canon is largely a homogenous corpus of literature, its ‘lonely’ aspect must be considered one voice among several perspectives. We can perceive some notable nuances in the way solitude is imagined within the *nikāyas* itself as a single genre of literature. What I have used as textual evidence are facets of an interconnected yet diverse set of sources. Across the Pāli imaginaire, solitude is often stressed alongside community obligations and I have also tried to highlight how these contrasting practices are interrelated. For example, loving-kindness serves to both strengthen fraternity as well as aid the meditator during periods of alone. An adept meditator is, conversely, seen as an ideal teacher or associate for monks/nuns and a fearless one can easily gain the admiration and respect of the laity.

Whilst notions of solitude must be considered alongside other different points of emphasis within the Pāli imaginaire that might be considered normative, I have attempted

¹ A IV 139, 25-27. Translation by Gethin, *Sayings of the Buddha*, p. 263.

to demonstrate how sources that present the ‘lonely’ aspects of the path are a significant voice from within the Pāli literature. Whilst differences in emphases on solitude can be detected between the commentaries and *nikāyas*, I have adduced passages from the commentaries which present an attitude that is consonant with the *nikāyas*. I suggest that prescriptions for physical seclusion can be conceived in terms of a continuum with notions of renunciation and spiritual progress that betrays the significance of meditation (*bhāvanā*) in the gradual path to *nibbāna*, which is itself classified, as well as imagined, as solitude in its ultimate sense.

I have approached the goal of my dissertation by way of three tasks. The first is to address a perceived paradox or even tension between seclusion and community. The second is to better understand solitude as a concept by tracing notions of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ solitude across a number of different terms. And thirdly, to redress what I have suggested is a paucity in scholarly works dealing with the place of physical seclusion in the Buddhist path. One outcome of this is the perception that *ārañṇaka* is a concept exclusive to ‘hermit types’. Whilst the ‘hermit’ type emblematic of the *Theragāthā* has a place within visions of Buddhist monastic life, so too are those monks and nuns who regularly take up meditation each afternoon in quiet places, away from others (*divāvihāra*).

I started to address the first issue in Chapter 1 by acknowledging a paradox in the way the texts reflect religious life. The task of cultivating wholesome mind states involving individual practice and meditative seclusion is compatible with group settings where an individual can develop wisdom from others, care for them and share in group practices. By being part of the *Saṅgha*, a *bhikkhu* is also connected to society at large through merit-sharing and preaching. Notions of ‘society’ are strengthened by a genuine regard for more pluralistic communities often imagined by utopic stories that acknowledge lay attainment, modifications to ascetic practice and renunciation later in life.

What draws one away from others for meditative work alone and what keeps one in the community are complementary ‘truths’ about religious life aimed at the same goal — the cessation of *dukkha* by a gradual path. Whereas a skilled meditator is the ideal companion and teacher to others, ‘social’ practices that build fraternity and community also aid the task of solitary meditation by helping individuals to understand and befriend themselves. What seems clear from the *nikāyas* is that concerns for the individual and other are deeply intertwined. Emotions are less a matter of ownership and more a

question of a shared efficacy with regard to understanding and easing *dukkha*. With an attitude of renunciation, one is more circumspect, guarded, diligent and restrained with regard to individual wants. Yet renunciation also includes the qualities of selflessness, patience and benevolence.

Lance Cousins wrote that the choice between forest-dwelling and study was a choice of lifestyle: ‘What we now call “meditation” would have been a part of both lifestyles’.² Writing mainly from the perspective of historical reality, Cousins went on to stress how study and meditation are complementary in the development of wisdom. From the perspective of a prescriptive reading of the sources, I have adduced evidence that illuminates the importance of meditative seclusion but that is voiced alongside values of togetherness. On this, I highlighted two points in particular in which descriptions of the way early monastics lived give clues about these ideals and aspirations. Firstly, there is a genuine regard for small, harmonious forest communities that reflect values of simplicity in renunciate life. And yet monks who live amongst smaller wandering types of communities can also be ‘well-spoken and learned’ and become beneficiaries of wisdom acquired from others. Secondly, I highlighted how the description of what we might call monasteries (*ārāmas*), that accommodate larger communities, overlaps with prescriptive formulae for physical seclusion in the natural environment. However, as well as being places of meditation, the *ārāma* benefits monks as centres of learning and are hence associated with wisdom.

An ordinary monk or nun’s path to sanctity is also a path of self-reliance (*aparapaccaya*). I have suggested that his/her increasingly ‘lonely’ or ‘narrow’ path is highlighted in a number of ways. The place of a monk/nun within conceptions of social utopia is highlighted in terms of a full life of renunciation, seclusion and meditative exertion. I adduced evidence that supports the idea that contemplative life draws a monk/nun intuitively inwards and increasingly independent of teachers. The term *yonisomanasikāra*, as part of the process of cultivating Right View, is a natural accompaniment to mindfulness and therefore, formal meditation practice. It starts by simply withdrawing attention from stimulating sensations and directing it to a simpler and more calming object. ‘Empty’ settings in nature are consistently singled out as benefiting in the process of adverting the mind to the meditation object. This experience is crucial in terms of developing the kind of knowledge that conditions independence

² Cousins, *Scholar Monks and Meditator Monks*, p. 44.

from a teacher. Accompanying a gradual stability in the attainment of *samādhi* is intuitive knowledge of what is impermanent, insubstantial and painful.

Some might, rightly, point out that the importance of both the inner dimension of reflection and the outer dimension of the words of a *Dhamma* teacher are equally important. They would also be correct to point out that, with regard to developing Right View, *yonisomanasikāra* as the former dimension, is to be applied in daily life and not just formal sitting practice. I have tried to argue that the teachings, gained from hearing the ‘voice of another’ as the latter dimension, are conversely internalised and embodied. In other words, both dimensions work together but eventually, after initial stages of acquisition and nurturing, understanding leads to self-confidence in the teachings and independence of a *kalyāṇamitta*. This principle gains support in how I suggested in Chapter 2, that the notion of ‘spiritual friendship’ can also be conceived as a trustful confidence in the *Dhamma* as teachings and need not be restricted to the presence of a physical person. Indeed, the Buddha as ‘peerless companion’ (*asāhaya*) is to be mindfully recollected. This principle is especially efficacious for settling and stilling the heart/mind, thereby apprehending the nature of fear when practising alone in the forest.

Alongside the importance of preserving the value of the group within a shared ethic, there is a genuine concern in some passages for how community life has the potential to undermine the work of individual liberation. I have highlighted how the *nikāyas* use the term *saṃgaṇikā* to emphasise two points. Firstly, the interrelationship between the *Saṅgha* and ordinary society and, secondly, to warn of the dangers of the religious community becoming a parallel to society. In the former relation, the delight of company or *saṃgaṇikā* is the opposite of the delight of solitude. I highlighted how ordinary saṃsāric manifestation of society in religious life is sometimes imagined through individual yearning to withdraw from stressful situations. Yet, *saṃsāra* is also reaffirmed by imagery that contrasts *bhikkhus* who fail to progress in their meditation by living near or in the village, with those who succeed by dwelling in the forest. I expressed this situation in terms of the first and second noble truths.

Whilst withdrawal is conceived at the primary stage of the path of renunciation of the ‘home’, it can also be perceived in terms of a secondary withdrawal that reflects a determination to root out the causes of *dukkha*. The *ārañṇaka* ideal then emerges as a constant theme in renunciate life as the regular and repeated practice of meditation and increasing independence from teachers. Whilst this process leads a *bhikkhu* closer to the goal, he is drawn back to the community as a spiritual companion to others.

In seeking to answer the question ‘what is solitude’ in Chapter 2, I distinguished between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ expressions of solitude found in the texts. I argued that the *āraññaka* ideal is preserved in the notion that ‘right solitude’ described in terms of both physical and mental seclusion that together form a continuum within the practice of *samādhi*. That physical seclusion alone is insufficient points to a depth and complexity of a gradual process of mental transformation. I suggested that ‘right solitude’ is envisaged as a process of both seclusion (or separation) and oneness (or unification) with relative stages of happiness. At this preliminary stage, I conceived ‘separation’ as stepping away from stimulating conditions and ‘oneness’ in terms of inhabiting a simpler environment, usually in nature. Stages of happiness take expression from more mundane types of emotional relief and bodily joy, through gradually more refined non-worldly forms of spiritual uplift and deepening stages of separation and oneness.

Whilst the *āraññaka* ideal is conceived as part of a gradual path towards self-liberation, physical seclusion need not be restricted to what we might call soteriological aims. The remedial or therapeutic value of naturally quiet places is mostly tacit and not directly expressed in doctrinal statements. I have suggested that the texts give voice to the value of remedial forms of isolation in two ways. Firstly, through the imagery of forest withdrawal as assisting in refreshing, healing and relaxing the body and mind. Secondly, by highlighting how *kāyaviveka* and abandoning the mental hindrances are contiguous stages of *samādhi*. This close connection speaks of the immediate relief that withdrawal can bring to wider forms of negative emotional states prior to any experience that we might define as ‘spiritual’. Explaining this relationship can be assisted by comparing the stilling of the five hindrances to the process of receiving and filtering a transmitted visual image. Preliminary stages of filtering bring about perceived enhancements which positively feedback to continuously make further refinements until the sharpest and clearest image is seen.

One might even consider from this that the *nikāyas* imagine the forest as a ‘healing space’; the equivalent of what modern psychotherapists call a ‘therapy room’. Most therapists would agree that healing cannot start until one accepts there is a problem. This acceptance is followed up with a positive step towards remedial action and this is almost always away from one’s normal home environment — the place often associated with the malaise — and into a dedicated space of healing.

In seeking to examine the value and importance of physical seclusion in certain parts of the *nikāyas*, I discussed how *kāyaviveka* is not limited to a single formula from

the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* but can be apprehended as a generic principle pertaining to quiet places away from people. In total, I identified three formulae for *kāyaviveka* that recur frequently across all five *nikāyas* in full or shortened forms. Included in my analysis are references to formulae that occur outside of a description of the gradual path. I highlighted how one of these formulae (found in the *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta*) recurs elsewhere in relation to the real rigors of forest dwelling associated with *dhutaṅga* monks and most notably in the *Bhayaberava-sutta* which recounts the Bodhisatta's practice deep in the jungle. More significantly in relation to my overall argument is how the *āraññaka*, or forest-dweller is conceived in relation to general qualities and spiritual factors that all *bhikkhus* commit towards bringing to completion.

Exceptions to the above do exist. *Kāyaviveka* is less clearly expressed in the *Cūlasuññatā-sutta*, which appears to present a wholly psychological 'entry' into emptiness. Nevertheless, we may still trace a play on imagery and terminology in the *sutta* that maintains the forest as practical metaphor. The combination of both practical and ideational is supported elsewhere in several linked terms that express the notion of 'right solitude' as physical as well as mental. These terms include *paṭisallāna* (seclusion), *ekavihāriya* ('dwelling alone'), *suññāgāra* ('empty place') and *adutiya* ('without partner/craving'). I have also attempted to show how the imagery of 'right solitude' employs concrete domains which in turn imagine the forest as the location *par excellence* for *samādhi*. A monk who is alone in the forest but plagued by thoughts or gripped by desire might seek to return to the community. For others, such as those described in the *Vanasamyutta*, remaining steadfast in the forest, or repeatedly returning there, illustrates how forest-dwelling is imagined in terms of individual determination and effort.

I explored the ideal of physical seclusion in Chapter 3 in connection with the term *ekacariyā*. I argued for a fresh perspective of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* which sees it as more inclusive than for 'hermit' types. I showed that the application of *ekacariyā* in the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* need not be restricted to physical seclusion which has, undoubtedly, been the interpretation of previous discussions. *Ekacariyā* is a more expansive concept that encompasses abstract themes related to conduct and meditation and, more significantly, to renunciation. The consideration of other abstract themes from the *sutta* give clues about why the Theravāda tradition associated the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* with *paccekabuddhas*. In support of an updated perspective of the nature of *paccekabuddhas* as not necessarily being defined by their silence or solitude, I argued that it is the *paccekabuddhas*' association with renouncing kings that offers the most reasonable

explanation of the traditional connection. The association with a *paccekabuddha*'s renunciation and self-effort is strengthened by an analysis of the *sutta*'s verses that reveals how these general themes appear alongside physical seclusion. It therefore seems reasonable to conceive the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* as a significant feature of the sources which give voice to solitude but where solitude encompasses a range of meanings. Moreover, it poetically reflects an impulse that is continuous to the act of going forth and steadfastly continues to be part of meditative life. In Chapter 3, I also discussed how more abstract notions of solitude are used to describe how a *buddha* or *paccekabuddha* is 'alone' or 'single' (*eka*). Whilst these descriptions help to clarify how the path is to be cultivated 'individually', we have to rely more generally on imagery to derive how solitude relates to the goal.

Whereas classic descriptions of the path present *nibbāna* as the goal in terms of both knowledge and the cessation of *dukkha*, I have highlighted passages in Chapter 2 which, yet again, juxtapose the attainment of *nibbāna* with the forest. Yet rather than trying to describe the indescribable, these passages help us to further unpick the complexities involved in the transformation from the conditioned to the unconditioned whilst prescribing meditation as a salient part of this process. Just as some passages highlight the transformation of fear to confidence, others contrast anxiety with serenity, suspicion with confidence, sorrow with bliss and dependence with independence. I have also suggested how the literal and metaphorical work in two additional ways. Firstly, although there are exceptions that speak of liberation of a group of people together through the teaching of the Buddha, individual awakening, as imagined by frequent reference to the forest and landscape, is most often a solitary event. Secondly, in these imaginative depictions, *nibbāna* is a non-social form of happiness that is entirely independent and perfectly in tune with the mind's innate and unencumbered purity.

The aesthetically pleasing aspects of landscape are often cited by scholars as examples of a Buddhist appreciation of nature. In Chapter 4, however, I examined how imagery of nature and landscape in Pāli literature is conceived as more than aesthetic adornments. I have been inspired by Steven Collins' approach that perceives Buddhist truth in texts as imagined as well as articulated in doctrine. I argued that nature in the Pāli imaginary is celebrated through metaphorical expressions of physical seclusion as an embodied experience of the landscape. The imagery of nature and landscape appears with both ubiquity and vitality as a 'call to the forest'. Comparing this imagery with the writings of contemporary 'solitary seers' of landscape help us to conceive aspects of the

Pāli imaginaire as part of a long literary history of nature writing where the power of the environment is articulated through a precision in language. I argued how the motif of a ‘delightful place’ or ‘pleasance’ runs throughout the imagery of *viveka* and speaks of physical and mental seclusion in continuum. Whilst such descriptions are rooted in mundane forms of happiness they, nevertheless, foreshadow non-worldly forms of bliss through meditative seclusion. Frequenting the forest, therefore, represents a skilful form of desire that connects the goal with the ‘lonely’ path.

I chose the ‘Kosambī quarrel’ in Chapter 5 to close this dissertation on a single narrative which I think articulates how meditative seclusion is a natural and important part of an ordinary monk’s religious life alongside living in the *Saṅgha*. Whilst, it is clear that the story describes an extraordinary episode in the Buddha’s life, it connects with the dangers of religious communities resembling ordinary societies and warns of the consequence of neglecting key renunciatory values. I have suggested how the Buddha’s withdrawal connects with a monk or nun’s second renunciation from ‘society’ in terms of physical seclusion. ‘Right solitude’ is narrated in terms of literally stepping away as well as the mental ease, silence and comfort. The story narrates both psychosis and metanoia with the Buddha’s forest sojourn as symbolic of healing. We are nevertheless reminded through the role of forest animals, that a monk or nun’s devotion to the Buddha means putting his teachings into practice, including the reality of living skilfully and harmoniously in the community.

I have approached the reading of Pāli texts as literature in order to uncover how solitude is valued as one aspect of the Buddhist path from a diverse set of literature that could be said to have several ‘voices’. The ‘lonely’ aspect of the path is therefore one that sits alongside the ‘fraternal’ aspect which maintains monastic community as well as a ‘social’ aspect which preserves monasticism within wider society.

Although historical questions of how monks actually practised have not been my concern, my argument is strengthened by the example of nineteenth and twentieth century forest monks in Thailand and Sri Lanka. If the texts inspired these monks to live meditative lives in the forest, it seems reasonable to expect those who practised over the history of two millennia to have done the same. In this sense, physical seclusion as actual forest-practice is part of the Pāli imaginaire that lives beyond the textual world.

Collins’ methodological approach to reading texts in terms of an imaginaire has clearly influenced how he treated the subject of solitude mainly in terms of a spiritual metaphor. His analysis highlights how the forest can be, for some, a state of mind, and

as such, an alternative but valid prescriptive reading. I hope that I have demonstrated how the metaphorical and literal are both valid in that the forest is not only a place in mind but a space to inhabit away from the crowd. Like the mind, the forest is at once untamed and simple. Yet through spiritual exercise, it can also be delightful and powerful.

An additional question I posed in this study is whether the commentaries are consistent with the *nikāya* view of the value of forest-dwelling that I have argued for. Is it possible to detect a change in attitude towards physical withdrawal in the commentarial period? Some may cite Buddhaghosa as an exemplar in favour of mainly metaphorical readings of solitude.³ Others might see the attitude that ‘everywhere is the forest’ as evidence of a deliberate ‘monasticisation’ of ascetic practices.⁴ But in the commentarial passages presented, I see no evidence of an antithetical attitude towards forest-dwelling. I have adduced passages from the commentaries which present an attitude that is consonant with the *nikāyas* and which sees forest-dwelling as positive. Firstly, they reflect how the routinised monastery can be potentially counterproductive to meditative life. Secondly, by elaborating in vivid detail the connection between forest withdrawal and wellbeing that help provide a skilful foundation for the qualities required of renunciate life. And, thirdly by preserving the imagery of nibbānic comfort, ease and fearlessness in commentarial narratives of forest-dwelling. On this matter I would, additionally, draw support from Lance Cousins who rejected Reginald Ray’s assertion that the Pāli texts are hostile towards the *dhutaṅga* practices. Cousins showed the opposite to be true and discussed the merits of including untranslated textual evidence from the Pāli *nikāyas* and commentaries which Ray neglected in doing.⁵

Whilst there is evidence of moderation with regards to ascetic practices, in the *Visuddhimagga*, this does not necessarily lead us to conclude a deliberate downplaying of the forest ideal. The attitude ‘everywhere is the forest’ must consider the cultural and historical situation at the time of Buddhaghosa who lived five or six centuries after the

³ See Chapter 4 where I quote Ian Harris who cites Buddhaghosa’s recommendation to reflect on falling leaves as a way of contemplating impermanence. However, the practice is characteristic of a tree-root dweller. See *Vism* 74, 22-23.

⁴ Ray, *Buddhist Saints in India*, p. 305.

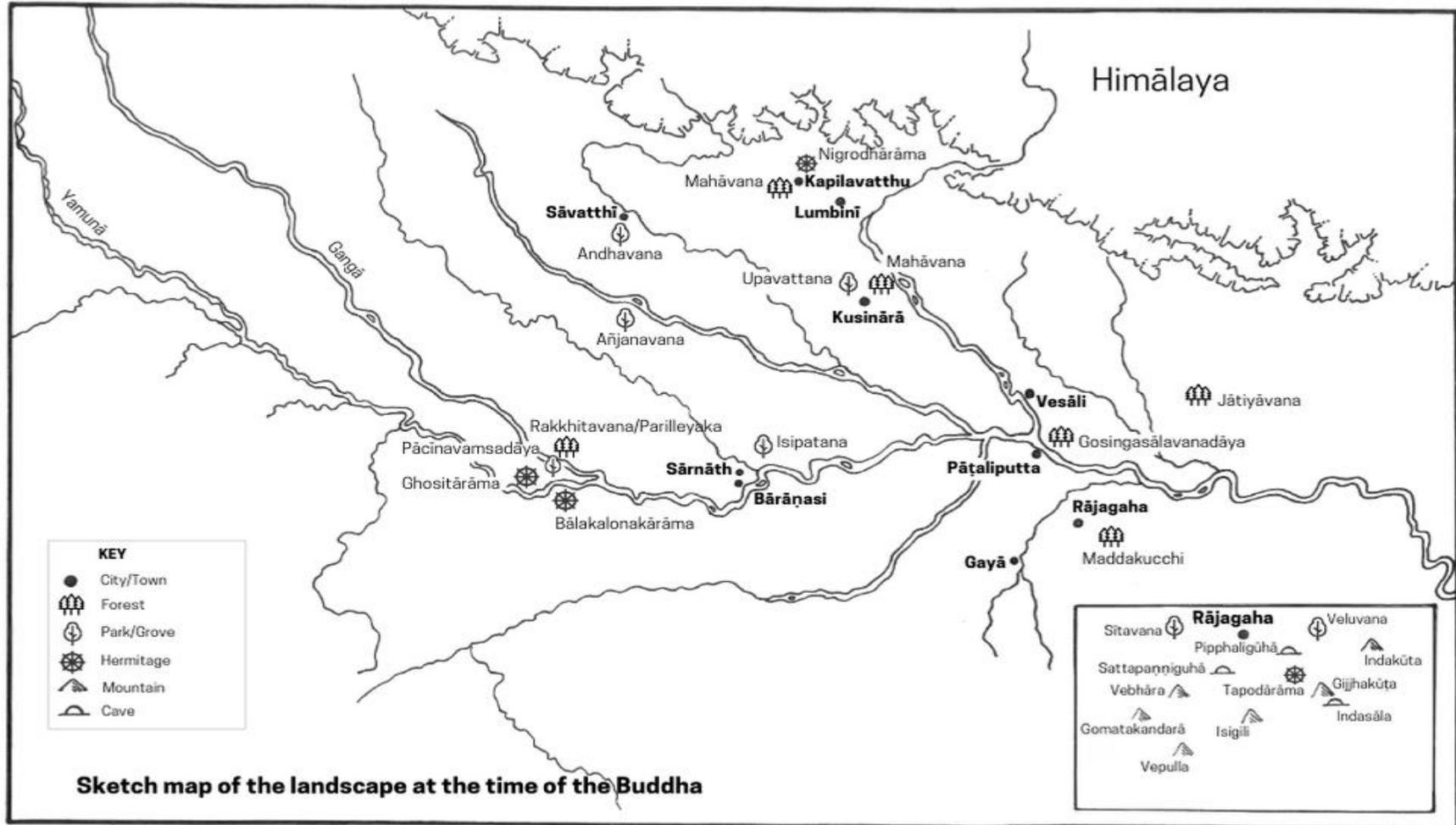
⁵ Lance Cousins, ‘Reginald A. Ray: Buddhist Saints in India: A study in Buddhist Values and Orientations’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 59 no. 1 (1996), 172-173, (p.173).

Buddha's *parinibbāna*.⁶ It is perhaps better conceived as a candid admission of these circumstances and overall intention for preserving the important work of meditation rather than a deliberate undermining of the forest-dwelling ideal.

Solitude conceived purely as a metaphor raises further questions as to whether it is necessary to be physically alone to experience *samādhi*. Many modern meditation teachers as well as meditators themselves might argue that it is not necessary to be alone. Indeed, the mind can easily be coaxed, especially as part of a psychotherapeutic intervention, into imagining oneself inhabiting a forest or other peaceful setting, just as it can be easily coaxed into imagining oneself anywhere for that matter. Modern mindfulness apps are designed to help one be 'mindful' anywhere and anytime, even in a crowded train where one can simply shut one's eyes and focus on one's breath or thoughts. Some modern mindfulness teachers might point out that mindfulness-based interventions should not be compared to the prescriptions of two-thousand-year-old religious texts. Yet there is also no doubt that modern mindfulness techniques have links to Buddhist practice albeit within a secularised and medicalised context. Within the Buddhist framework, mindfulness, or *sati*, is an important part of the process of mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*). So, whilst *sati* must be practised in daily life, it nevertheless is part of a path concerned with the perfection of several deeply interconnected spiritual qualities that move the meditator beyond worldly conditions and attachments that are considered as painful or lead to pain. I hope I have demonstrated that the perfection of these qualities, evinced in texts espouse the value of frequent, if not sustained, periods alone.

⁶ Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, pp. 109-100.

Appendix



Map sketched and adapted by Geanina Grigore from Rupert Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. xiv.

Abbreviations

Pāli and Sanskrit Texts

A	<i>Āṅguttara Nikāya</i>
Ap	<i>Apadāna</i>
It	<i>Itivuttaka</i>
Ud	<i>Udāna</i>
Ud-a	<i>Udāna Commentary (Paramatthadīpanī)</i>
RV	<i>Ṛg Veda</i>
Cp	<i>Cariyāpiṭaka</i>
J	<i>Jātaka</i>
Th	<i>Theragāthā</i>
Th-a	<i>Theragāthā Commentary</i>
Thī	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
Thī-a	<i>Therīgāthā Commentary</i>
D	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
Dhp-a	<i>Dhammapada Commentary (Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā)</i>
Dhs	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i>
Nidd I	<i>Mahāniddeśa</i>
Nidd II	<i>Cūḷaniddeśa</i>
Nett	<i>Nettipakaraṇa</i>
Paṭis	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i>
Peṭ	<i>Peṭakopadesa</i>
Pj	<i>Paramatthajotikā</i> (commentary on the <i>Sutta Nipāta</i>)
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i> (commentary on the <i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>)
Bca	<i>Bodhicaryāvatāra</i>
M	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
Mil	<i>Milindapañha</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i> (commentary on the <i>Āṅguttara Nikāya</i>)
Vin	<i>Vinaya Piṭaka</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>
S	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>

Spk	<i>Sāratthappakāsinī</i> (commentary on the <i>Samyutta Nikāya</i>)
Sn	<i>Sutta Nipāta</i>
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī</i> (commentary on the <i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>)

Others

Be	Burmese Edition of Pāli text
BHSD	Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary
CPD	Trenckner et al., Critical Pāli Dictionary
Ce	Sinhalese Edition of Pāli text
DPPN	Malalasekera, Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names
DOP	Cone, Dictionary of Pāli
Ee	PTS English Edition of Pāli text
MW	Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary
Ne	Nāgarī Edition of Pāli text
PED	Rhys Davids & Stede, Pāli-English Dictionary
PTS	Pāli Text Society
Se	King of Siam's Edition of Pāli text
Skt	Sanskrit
T	Taisho Edition of Chinese Āgama

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