

## Nigamana

Paramavicittanayakovida-paññājavana-samannāgatenā suvisuddha-buddhi-viriya<sup>1</sup>-sīlācāra-guṇasamannāgatenā<sup>2</sup> aparimitapāramitāsambhūta-paññānubhāvajanita-tiṭṭhaka-dharena Arimaddana-nagara-gocaragāma-pācīnadisābhāgaṭṭhita<sup>3</sup>-tiloka-nayana-sabbaññudhātu-uṇhīśacetiyaṃ nissāya vasantena ditṭhadhammikasamparāyika-hitatthānusāsaka-satthuno sāsanahitakāmena Laṅkādīpa-paradīpavāsīnaṃ sotujanānaṃ pariyattim pariyāpuṇantena suvisuddha-buddhi-viriya-sīlācāraguṇa-samannāgata-tiṭṭhakadharagarugahita-Saddhammajotipālo ti nāma-vhaya-therena kato sotūnaṃ pītiya-dhānako Nāmacārādīpako nāma niṭṭhito.

Saddhammahitakāmena Nāmacārādīpakaṃ  
karontena mayā pattam yaṃ puññaṃ hitadāyakaṃ.

Tena puññaena ijjhantu sabbasattamanorathā  
rājāno pi ca rakkhantu dhammena sāsaṇaṃ pajam.

Labhāmaṃ pattabhava araññaṃ  
anantaram āyubalaṃ ārogyam  
dadātu Metteyya-jino subuddho  
tilokasantaṃ amataṃ avānaṃ.

**Nāmacārādīpakaṃ niṭṭhitaṃ**

<sup>1</sup>viriya and so below

<sup>2</sup>guṇasamaṅgitenā

<sup>3</sup>pācīnadisābhāgaṭṭhitena

## CATEGORIES OF SUTTA IN THE PĀLI NIKĀYAS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR APPRECIATION OF THE BUDDHIST TEACHING AND LITERATURE.\*

### ABSTRACT

Suttas in the Pāli Canon fall into distinct categories. The three largest of these, Sermons, Debates and Consultations, are analysed in this paper. These different categories can be clearly defined by means of their introductory and concluding formulas, and their internal structure. The problem of the authenticity of these categories is addressed. The theory is then put forward that the different types of sutta are not equally reliable with regard to the authenticity of the teaching they contain, and especially that the version of the Teaching contained in Sermons and Consultations may be more reliable than that presented in Debates. It is then argued that the ratios of these different types of sutta point to an original difference of purpose between DN and MN: the original purpose of DN being the attraction of converts, that of MN, the presentation of the leader, both as a real person and as an archetype (a Tathāgata), and the integration of new monks into the community and the practice. Some remarks are made about the usefulness of these categories to research into original Buddhism. Finally, a brief comparison is made between the period the Buddha lived in and our own.

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## CATEGORIES OF SUTTA IN THE PĀLI NIKĀYAS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR APPRECIATION OF THE BUDDHIST TEACHING AND LITERATURE.<sup>1</sup>

The various texts and collections of the Pāli Canon are often treated as if each of them had the same purpose and function. On a superficial level this is of course true: at least from the perspective of our time they are a collection of texts that preserve one school's version of the Buddha's Teaching. But at the very earliest time, in order to ensure the propagation of the new religion, different sorts of material would have been necessary. At the very least the new religion would have had to be made known in a way that would gain both the converts who would make possible its survival, and the lay-supporters who would make possible the survival of the converts. After that appropriate material would be required to integrate the converts into the values and standards of the new religion, and further material to teach them its principles and practices and to help them deepen their commitment and their knowledge. The requirement for different sorts of material for different purposes would from the beginning have spontaneously given rise to different types of collections, i.e. sets of suttas all serving the same function and remembered as a group. At a later time, and under different historical

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper translations will be offered in the footnotes to enable comparison by scholars who are unfamiliar with Pāli and who study other oral literatures and related topics.

Textual variations such as name changes, changes in pronoun or in the number of the verbs (singular or plural) and so forth will not be noted as they are not relevant for the purposes of this paper.

Formulas will be numbered consecutively. They will be referred to thus: "1", "2".

DN 16, the *Mahā Parinibbāna Suttanta* will not be included in this study. Frauwallner (1956) has shown that it originally belonged to the *Skandhaka* of the Vinaya Piṭaka, and indeed it is too much an amalgam and too different from the other Dīgha suttas to warrant its inclusion here.

conditions, the original need which caused certain suttas to be grouped together would have been lost sight of, and other reasons for the grouping together of suttas invented. The explanation that Majjhima Nikāya and Dīgha Nikāya are simply the collection of the long suttas and the collection of the medium length suttas may come from just such a time, after their original functions had been forgotten.

The Majjhima and Dīgha Nikāyas contain little of the categorising of the Aṅguttara and Saṃyutta Nikāyas, few of the rules for the Order, as in Vinaya, and furthermore, they are rather coherent material. They offer an opportunity to study certain of the literary forms in which suttas are presented. A statistical analysis of the proportional representation of each of the main categories of sutta in these two collections suggests that originally each of them came about to serve a separate and distinct purpose. This has implications for our understanding of Buddhist literature and the Teaching it contains.

Suttas in the Dīgha and Majjhima Nikāyas have been generally described as "sermons", "dialogues", "narratives", "discourses",<sup>2</sup> "prose dialogues, legends, pithy sayings, and verses", "speeches",<sup>3</sup> or they may be studied as part of Indian kāvya literature.<sup>4</sup> Categories of sutta in the Dīgha and the Majjhima Nikāyas can, however, be rather more precisely distinguished. The means for making distinctions among the suttas are the formulas which provide their structure: their introductory and concluding formulas, the formulas that occur regularly within certain categories of sutta only, the use of particular verbs and expressions and certain stylised literary features.

This article will provide the criteria for the categorisation of three types of sutta: Sermons, Debates, and Consultations. Most of the suttas in the Nikāyas can be categorised in one of these three ways. Those that cannot

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<sup>2</sup> Winternitz, 1933, 34.

<sup>3</sup> Law, 1933, 79, 80.

<sup>4</sup> Warder, 1974, Chapter XII.

include gāthās, and some of the stories and myths. These categories will not be treated in detail here.

A Sermon is defined to be a discourse for the purpose of religious instruction containing exhortation and/or instruction. A Consultation is an occasion where someone, bhikkhu or otherwise, has recourse to the Buddha or to a senior monk for instruction or information, or where the Buddha or a senior monk initiates a particular kind of dialogue with a monk or someone belonging to another group or sect. A Debate is a formal intellectual confrontation in which one party challenges another in a contest of religious knowledge.

## 1. SERMONS.

Sermons can be distinguished by their introductory and concluding formulas and by their internal structure. They may comprise entire suttas, or they may be introduced within a sutta that begins as a Debate or Consultation. Entire suttas which through their opening and concluding formulas can be defined as Sermons are preached only to the monks. Sermons that are preached to persons who are not monks are contained only in Debates<sup>5</sup> and Consultations.<sup>6</sup> In these circumstances monks are always present as well.

### 1.1. The Standard Introductory Formulas for Sermons.

There are two formulas, one being an expansion of the other, which occur at the beginning of suttas and which define these suttas to be Sermons. These formulas appear only at the beginning of sermons. They therefore convey immediately to any audience the information that the

<sup>5</sup> DN 1; 2; 4; 5; 6; 7; 13. MN 30; 36; 41; 94; 135.

<sup>6</sup> MN 27; 105. There is one exceptional case, MN 53, where the Buddha instructs Ānanda to preach to the Sakyans.

the sutta about to be recited is a sermon. The introductory formulas follow the standard “*Evam me sutam*” and a brief statement of location.<sup>7</sup>

#### i. The simplest introductory formula.

This is:

- 1 “*Tatra kho Bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi ‘Bhikkhavo’ ti. ‘Bhadante’ ti te bhikkhū Bhagavato paccassosum. Bhagavā etad avoca.*”<sup>8</sup>

The theme of the sermon is introduced in the opening sentence which follows the formula.

Instances:

DN suttas: 22; 26; 30; 33; 34.

Total = 5/34 = 14.7%.

MN suttas: 3; 5; 6; 7; 9; 10; 11; 15; 16; 19; 20; 25; 28; 33; 34; 39; 40; 45; 49; 64; 65; 70; 101; 102; 103; 106; 111; 112; 115; 116; 129; 130; 141.

Total = 33/152 = 21.71%.

#### ii. The expanded introductory formula.

This longer introductory formula is made up of three parts. It begins with the simplest introductory formula, “1” above. This is followed by the announcement of the theme in a standardised form, an

<sup>7</sup> This is an important point as one contributing feature in the definition of debates is their longer, more elaborate description of the location.

<sup>8</sup> “And there the Lord addressed the bhikkhus, saying ‘Bhikkhus’. ‘Revered Sir’, those bhikkhus acknowledged him. The Lord spoke thus:”

injunction to the bhikkhus to listen and the acknowledgement of this injunction. The full expanded introductory formula is:

- 2 “*Tatra kho Bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi ‘Bhikkhavo’ ti. ‘Bhadante’ ti te bhikkhū Bhagavato paccassosum. Bhagavā etad avoca:*  
(Theme of sutta) *vo bhikkhave desessāmi ti. tam suṇātha sādhucaṃ manasikarotha, bhāssissāmi ti. Evam bhante ti kho te bhikkhū Bhagavato paccassosum. Bhagavā etad avoca:*”<sup>9</sup>

Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 1; 2; 17; 113; 114; 117; 120; 131; 137; 138; 139; 140<sup>10</sup>; 148; 149.

Total = 14/152 = 9.21%

## 1.2. Formulas that introduce Sermons in the middle of suttas.

Part of “2” occurs in the middle of suttas that have begun in some other way. It is the independent formula:

<sup>9</sup> “And there the Lord addressed the bhikkhus, saying ‘Bhikkhus’. ‘Revered Sir’, those bhikkhus acknowledged him. The Lord spoke thus: ‘I will teach you, bhikkhus, (theme of sermon). Listen to it, apply your minds well. I will speak’. ‘Yes, Revered One’, these bhikkhus acknowledged the Lord. The Lord spoke thus:”

<sup>10</sup> The formula is not completely standard here.

- 3 *tena hi (name) suṇātha sādhucaṃ manasikarotha, bhāssissāmi ti. Evam bhante ti kho (te bhikkhū) Bhagavato paccassosum. Bhagavā etad avoca:*<sup>11</sup>

This formula therefore functions as a Sermon-marker, a cue in a sutta which indicates to the audience that what is about to follow will be a Sermon. “3” is preceded by certain standard formulas and expressions. These may be direct questions, or requests for teaching or for the expansion of a Sermon given in brief. “3” may also follow the announcement by the Buddha that he will teach. It may introduce a parable.

### i. Direct Questions.

In some Debate Suttas, once the adversary has been reduced to asking the Buddha for an explanation,<sup>12</sup> “3” is a frequently used means of introducing the Buddha’s answer.

Instances.

DN suttas: 2 [i 62, § 39]; 4 [i 124, § 22]; 5 [i 134, § 9]; 6 [i 157, § 15]; 7 [i 159, § 1]; 13 [i 249, § 39]; 31 [iii 181 § 2].

MN suttas: 27; 54; 135.

<sup>11</sup> “Listen to it, apply your minds well. I will speak’. ‘Yes, Revered One’, these bhikkhus acknowledged the Lord. The Lord spoke thus:”

<sup>12</sup> See below for an analysis of this category of sutta and especially for the importance of this type of situation.

ii. Requests for teaching or for expansions of Sermons given in brief.

Requests for Sermons or expansions of Sermons in brief seem to have been becoming formulaic, but not to have been distilled by the *bhāṇakas* (reciters) or by the redactors into one standard formula. This movement towards formula can be seen in the stereotyped use of certain words and phrases. Certain expressions are used when resorting to the Buddha himself (MN 41; 42; 135: “4” below), a different expression is used when resorting to the senior monk Mahā-Kaccāna (MN 18; 133: “5” below), and yet another when resorting to the monk Udena (MN 94 [ii 161,17-19]). These expressions are then followed by formula “3”. They are frequently preceded by expressions of flattery directed towards the recipient of the request.<sup>13</sup>

The formula for addressing the Buddha is:

- 4 *Na kho mayam imassa bhoto Gotamassa saṅkhittena bhāsitaṣṣa vitthārena atthaṃ avibhattassa vitthārena atthaṃ ājānāma; sādhu no bhavaṃ Gotamo tathā dhammaṃ desetu yathā mayam imassa bhoto Gotamassa saṅkhittena bhāsitaṣṣa vitthārena atthaṃ avibhattassa vitthārena atthaṃ ājāneyyāma ti.*<sup>14</sup>

Udena is approached with a simple version of this formula,<sup>15</sup> while Mahā-Kaccāna is addressed through the related formula:

<sup>13</sup> These are an interesting category of formula in their own right. They deserve their own study, and will not be discussed or quoted here.

<sup>14</sup> “We do not know the meaning in detail of what was said by the Lord Gotama in brief; we do not know the meaning in detail of what was not explained. Please let the Lord Gotama teach us that Teaching so that we may know the meaning in detail of what was spoken in brief by the Lord Gotama; so that we might know the meaning in detail of what was not explained.” MN 41; 42; 135.

<sup>15</sup> MN 94 [ii 161,17-19].

- 5 *pahoti c’ āyasmā Mahā-Kaccāno imassa Bhagavatā saṅkhittena uddesassa uddiṭṭhassa (vitthārena atthaṃ avibhattassa vitthārena) atthaṃ vibhajitum. Vibhajaj’ āyasmā Mahā-Kaccāno agarukarivā ti*<sup>16</sup>

Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN 18; 41; 42; 94; 133; 135.

The further formula for addressing the Buddha:

- 6 *sādhu vata Bhagavantam yeva bho Gotamaṃ paṭibhātu etassa bhāsitaṣṣa attho, Bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū dhāressantī ti,*<sup>17</sup>

followed by “3”, also occurs.

Instances:

DN suttas: DN 4 [i 124].

MN suttas: 3; 9; 46; 47; 68; 122 [iii 115].

There is also the simple formula

- 7 *sādhu me ... desetu*<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> “Mahā-Kaccāno is able to go into in detail regarding the meaning of the exposition set out by the Lord in brief; he is able to go into in detail regarding the meaning of what was not explained. Mahā-Kaccāno explains without being inconvenienced.” MN 18; 24-27; 133.

<sup>17</sup> “Please, Sir, let the Lord explain the meaning of what was said. When they have heard (it) from the Lord the bhikkhus will remember (it).”

<sup>18</sup> “Please teach me ... .”

Instances:

DN suttas: 5 [i 134]; 13 [i 249].  
MN suttas: 73.

There is also the non-standardised form,

*Sādhu maṃ, bhante, Bhagavā saṃkhittena ovādena ovadatu*  
... ,<sup>19</sup> MN 145.

The standard phrases in these sermon requests are particularly  
*sādhu no ... desetu* “please teach us”

Instances:

DN suttas: 5 [i 134]; 13 [i 249].  
MN suttas: 41; 42; 73; 94; 135.

and *sādhu paṭibhānu* “please let come to your mind”.

Instances:

DN suttas: 4 [i 124].  
MN suttas: 3; 9; 46; 47; 68; 76 [i 514,24-28].

Further there is the expression of encouragement from the  
monks to the Buddha which indicates their readiness to hear a Sermon:

8 *“Etassa Bhagavā kālo, etassa Sugata kālo, yaṃ bhagavā ...  
dhammiṃ katham kareyya, Bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū  
dhāressantī ti.”*<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> “Please let the Lord instruct me with brief instructions ... .”

<sup>20</sup> “The Lord should teach dhamma. It is the appropriate time for this, Lord. It is the appropriate time for this, Well-come One. When the monks have heard the Lord, they will remember (his words).”

Instances:

DN suttas: 14.  
MN suttas: 51; 64; 105; 136; 152.

### iii. Instructions to preach.

Instructions to preach rather self-evidently introduce Sermons.  
The terminology used in these is similar to that used in requests for  
sermons. The verb *paṭibhāti* is standard, and the expression *dhammī kathā*  
rather common.

9 *Paṭibhātu taṃ ...* <sup>21</sup>

Instances:

DN: 33 [iii 209].  
MN: 53 [i 354,21-26]; 123.

In the *Nandakovāda Sutta* no theme is introduced and the  
Buddha simply instructs Nandaka to give a sermon to the nuns in these  
words: *Ovāda, Nandaka, bhikkhuniyo. ... karohi tvaṃ, brāhmaṇa,  
bhikkhunīnaṃ dhammikathan ti (MN 146).*<sup>22</sup>

### iv. Introducing a parable.

The formula “3” may also may be also used to introduce a simile  
or a parable in the middle of a sutta that is not a sermon.

<sup>21</sup> “Let come to your mind, ... .”

<sup>22</sup> “Instruct the nuns, Nandaka. Provide them with a sermon.”

Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 27 (a Debate); 65 (a Consultation).

### 1.3. Expressions that may introduce Sermons.

Certain terms and expressions may introduce Sermons. Because their use is not consistent these cannot be considered invariably to be Sermon markers. Nevertheless they require mention here.

i. The question “What were you talking about ?” as a Sermon marker.

A conventional means of introducing the Buddha to the main stage used in these suttas is to have him come up to a group of monks or religious practitioners of other persuasions and to ask them what they are talking about.

10 *Kāya nu 'ttha bhikkhave etarahi kathāya sannisinnā, kā ca pana vo antarākathā vippakatā ti* (MN 26 [i 161]).<sup>23</sup>

This is a challenging question. The type of sutta it introduces depends on the answer given. When the monks are thus addressed they answer with the subject of their discourse, and the Buddha immediately begins a Sermon. When others who are not monks (and who usually are *paribbājakas* of whatever kind) are thus addressed they evade the question and instead pose another, and the sutta develops into a Debate.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> “As you were sitting down just now, what was your talk about, monks ? What was your talk that was interrupted ?”

<sup>24</sup> See section on Debate below.

Instances where sermons are thus introduced:

DN suttas: 14

MN suttas: 26, 76, 119, 123.

ii. The expression “*dhammi kathā*” as a Sermon marker.

The expression *dhammi kathā* may be used when a sermon is requested (DN 33; MN 76 [i 514]; 146 [iii 270]). There are, however, no regular or formulaic connecting phrases. This expression is used generally for the Buddha’s discourse and occasionally for the discourse of monks too.

iii. The verb “*āmanteti*” as a Sermon marker.

The verb *āmanteti* occurs in both the simple and the extended introductory formulas. It is standard too when the Buddha speaks to the monks. The phrase:

11 *Atha kho Bhagavā ... bhikkhū/(name of bhikkhu) āmantesi*:<sup>25</sup>

which forms part of both introductory formulas may on its own introduce a Sermon.

Instances:

DN suttas: 32 [iii. 206].

MN suttas: 21 [i 124]; 29; 48 [i 322,5]; 53 [i 354,31]; 67 [i 459]; 69;

<sup>25</sup> “And then the Lord addressed the monk/(name of monk) ... .”

This phrase appears also in the following variant form:

12 *Atha kho Bhagavā tuṅhibhūtaṃ tuṅhibhūtaṃ  
bhikkhusaṃghaṃ anuviloketvā bhikkhū āmantesi.*<sup>26</sup>

Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 110 [iii 21]; 118 [iii 79, 80].

#### 1.4. The internal structure of a Sermon.

Sermons define themselves also by their internal structure, which is simple and unvarying. The subject of the Sermon will be proposed either as a statement or as a question. The Sermon will then be developed methodically either through the expansion of a series of statements or through the expositions to a series of rhetorical questions. Sermons are not usually interrupted. Where there are rhetorical questions within a Sermon it is extremely unusual for these to be answered by the monks. This is a feature that clearly distinguishes Sermons from Consultations<sup>27</sup>: Sermons are most usually monologues, Consultations are most usually dialogues.

Instances of Sermons in which rhetorical questions are answered:

DN Sermons: none.

MN Sermons: 105; 106; 110; 119; 129

Total = 5/57 = 8.77%.

<sup>26</sup> “And then the Lord, surveying the completely silent community of monks, addressed the monks:”

<sup>27</sup> See below for the discussion of this category of sutta.

#### 1.5. Concluding formulas.

##### i. The standard concluding formula.

The standard concluding formula is completely regular and unvarying except for the names it contains. These vary because sermons are not invariably given by the Buddha and the audience is not invariably, although most usually it is, “bhikkhus” in general.

The standard conclusion to a sermon is an acknowledgement by the monks or by one particular monk in the following form (the words in brackets being those that change):

13 *Idam avoca (Bhagavā). Attamaṇā (te bhikkhū) Bhagavato  
bhāsitaṃ abhinandun ti.*<sup>28</sup>

Instances:

DN suttas: 1; 14; 22; 26; 32; 33 and 34.

MN suttas: 1-3; 6; 9-11; 15-21; 25; 26; 28-30; 33; 39;  
40; 45-48; 51; 53; 64; 65; 67; 68; 70; 101-103; 105;  
106; 110-115; 117-120; 122; 123; 129; 131; 133; 134;  
136-139; 141; 145; 146; 148; 149; 152.

A variation of this concluding formula with compounds of the verbs “bhāsati” and “abhinandati” is also found.

14 *Itiha te ubho mahānāgā aññamaññassa subhāsitaṃ  
samanumodiṃsū ti.*<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> “Thus spoke the Lord. Delighted these monks rejoiced in what the Lord had said.” (tr. MLS I 8).

<sup>29</sup> “In this wise did each of these great beings rejoice together in what was well spoken by the other.” (tr. MLS I 40).



## Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 5. (See also under Consultations.)

Occasionally a concluding formula is followed by a statement that a monk or a group of monks has attained a particular stage.

## Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 147; 148.

## ii. The Concluding formula when suttas end in verses.

When a sutta is concluded with verses, these are introduced by the following concluding formula:

15 *Idam avoca Bhagavā, idaṃ varvā Sugato athāparaṃ etad avoca Sathā:*<sup>30</sup>

## Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 34; 130; 142.

## 2. DEBATES.

A sutta can be defined as a Sermon on the grounds of its opening and closing formulas and its internal structure. The criteria that permit a sutta to be defined as a Debate include some formulas, but for the most part it is the features of certain suttas that permit their definition as Debates.

<sup>30</sup> "Thus spoke the Lord; the Well-farer having said this, the Teacher then spoke thus:" (tr. MLS I 279).

A sutta can be categorised as a Debate when it has at least the following features: two opponents, viz., the Buddha or a senior monk, and an adversary; a challenge; a refutation; and an admission of defeat.<sup>31</sup> These may be regarded as the major features of the Debate suttas. Other features which may be regarded as minor, but which are not unimportant, are usually present and many of these are formularised. The formulas are often extremely long<sup>32</sup> and so not all of them will be quoted below, nor, as these are minor features, will every location where a particular formula or feature appears be given.

There are three types of debate: (I) the dramatic debate: this is recounted as it goes along; (II) the reported debate: this is a debate that has taken place in the past and which the Buddha is recounting on a later occasion; (III) the debate with hypothetical opponents: here the views of certain general groups, "*samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas*" are disputed. As a genre of literature the Dramatic Debate is, as the word suggests, a drama. It is the occasion when religious leaders put each others' knowledge and prestige to the test in public. Everything is to be won or lost.<sup>33</sup> In the texts, individual speeches are recorded so that the development and the course of the argument can be followed verbatim. Sometimes the reaction of the audience is recorded and this serves to heighten the drama. Reported Debates have similar immediacy: the Buddha is recounting a previous Dramatic Debate. They are, however, less exciting. The element of contest in a Reported Debate is neither so pronounced nor so important as in a Dramatic Debate. Its outcome is already known. Debates with hypothetical opponents are occasions where wrong views are criticised and right views expounded by the Buddha. They serve a philosophical and didactic purpose.

<sup>31</sup> See Witzel, 1987, for some comparisons between the rules of discussion, of challenge and of defeat in Vedic and in Pali literature.

<sup>32</sup> for example the formula on brahman virtues in DN 4 [i 113 foll.].

<sup>33</sup> Witzel, 1987, 307.

The dramatic debate shows most clearly the sequence of features of the Debate suttas.

## I. THE DRAMATIC DEBATE.

### i. The description of the Location.

Where the introduction to a Sermon is a brief record of the place in which it was given, the description of the location in a Debate sutta is usually given more importance. It is more elaborate and details are specified. This is because its function is to set the scene and create the atmosphere for a drama. Thus if the Buddha's opponent is a rich brahman the beauty and wealth of his domain is described,<sup>34</sup> or we may be told that a location just happened to contain at that time a number of brahmins.<sup>35</sup> Where the opponent is another wanderer less importance is given to the location.

### ii. The presentation of the opponents and their credentials.

As a Debate is a drama it is important in the presentation of the characters to establish the worth of the adversaries from the outset. Especially, as these Debates are recounted by the Buddhists, the Buddha's prestige and the importance of the debate that will follow are enhanced by the prestige and importance of his adversary. There are standard ways of introducing and demonstrating the prestige of the different types of adversaries and, equally, there are standard ways of showing that the Buddha's prestige equals their own. These standard ways are (a) to show the social status of the adversary, (b) to demonstrate his knowledge, (c)

<sup>34</sup> DN 3; 4; 5. MN 95.

<sup>35</sup> DN 6; 13. MN 98.

to describe the size of his following, (d) to show the respect with which he greets the Buddha.

### a. The social status of the adversary.

The social status of the adversary is an important feature especially where the opponent is a brahman or a king (kṣatriya) and it is emphasised by the inclusion of many details. Where the adversary is an important brahman the richness of his domain and the importance of his king-patron is emphasised at the beginning of the account of the Debate, where this feature forms part of the scene-setting (Location). The elaborate procession in which this type of adversary may approach the Buddha is often described.<sup>36</sup>

By promoting the high social status of the adversary the texts prove that the Buddha is held in high esteem by this class of people.

### b. The knowledge and attainments of the adversaries.

The news of the Buddha's arrival in a particular area is announced in a formula that describes both the size of his following (see c. below) and the extent of his knowledge and attainments:

16 *“Taṃ kho pana bhavaṃ Gotamaṃ evaṃ kalyāṇo kittisaddo abbhuggato: ‘Iti pi so Bhagavā araham sammā-sambuddho vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno sugato loka-vidū anuttaro purisa-damma-sārathi satthā deva-manussānaṃ buddho bhagavā.’ So imaṃ lokaṃ sadevakaṃ samārakaṃ sabrahmakāṃ sassamaṇa-brāhmaṇiṃ pajāṃ sadevamanussaṃ sayāṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedeti. So dhammaṃ deseti ādi-kalyāṇaṃ majjhe kalyāṇaṃ pariyosāna-kalyāṇaṃ sātthaṃ savyañjanaṃ, kevala-paripunnāṃ*

<sup>36</sup> DN 2; 3. MN 84.

*parisuddham brahmacariyaṃ pakāseti. Sādhu kho pana tathā-rūpānaṃ arahataṃ dassanaṃ hotī ti.*<sup>37</sup>

This formula occurs wherever the opponent is a brahman, although its use is not limited to these occasions<sup>38</sup>, nor to the Debate situation. The response to this formula by the brahman to whose domain the Buddha has come is either that he decides to visit the Buddha, or that he sends a student (*antevāsī*).

There are two formulas for describing the highest state of brahman knowledge, a very long one<sup>39</sup> and a short one. I quote only the short one:

17 ... *ajjhāyako mantadharo tiṇṇaṃ vedānaṃ pāragū sanighaṇḍu-keṭubhānaṃ sākharappabhedānaṃ itihāsa-pañcamānaṃ padako veyyākaraṇo lokāyata-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇesu anavayo ...*<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> “Now regarding that venerable Gotama, such is the high reputation that has been noised abroad : — That Blessed One is an Arahata, a fully awakened one, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy, with knowledge of the worlds, unsurpassed as a guide to mortals willing to be led, a teacher for gods and men, a Blessed One a Buddha. He, by himself, thoroughly knows and sees, as it were, face to face this universe, — including the worlds above of the gods, the Brahmas, and the māras, and the world below with its recluses and Brahmans, its princes and peoples, — and having known it, he makes his knowledge known to others. The truth, lovely in its origin, lovely in its progress, lovely in its consummation, doth he proclaim both in the spirit and in the letter, the higher life doth he make known, in all its fullness and in all its purity. And good is it to pay visits to Arahats like that.” (tr. DB I 109).

DN 2 [i 49] (abbreviated version); 3 [i 87]; 5 [i 127 foll.]. MN 41; 60; 75; 91; 92; 95.

<sup>38</sup> In the *Sela Sutta*, MN 92, this statement of attributes is communicated to Keniya, the matted-haired ascetic.

<sup>39</sup> DN 4 [i 113 foll.]; 5 [i 137]. MN 95.

<sup>40</sup> “He was a repeater (of the sacred words) knowing the mystic verses by heart, one who had mastered the Three Vedas, with the indices, the ritual, the phonology, and the exegesis (as a fourth), and the legends as a fifth, learned in

The short formula is most usual when the brahman sends one of his student to see the Buddha on his behalf. When, however, the brahman leader decides to go on his own account, there is a dramatic turn of events. His followers warn him that should he do that his own glory (*yasas*) will be diminished and that of the Buddha enhanced. They advise him rather to let the Buddha call upon him. They support this advice with the recitation of a long description of all the features that makes this man such a true brahman and such an important religious leader, and which make it, therefore, in every way inappropriate that he should be the one to pay the visit. This gives the brahman the opportunity to defend his proposed action, and to say that indeed the Buddha himself also possesses all of these brahman virtues.<sup>41</sup> This recognition that the Buddha receives from other religious leaders further serves in these texts to demonstrate the esteem in which he is held and his worthiness as an opponent.

### c. The audience.

The description of the size of the following around each of the opponents is a frequent feature and its comportsment serves to enhance, or otherwise, the importance of each adversary. The nature of audience is also a point. The respectful silence and concentration of large groups of monks is frequently contrasted with noise and gossip among the followings of the various wanderers.<sup>42</sup>

the idioms and the grammar, versed in Lokāyata sophistry, and in the theory of the signs on the body of a great man ... DN 3 [i 88]. MN 93 [ii 147].

<sup>41</sup> DN 4; 5. MN 95.

<sup>42</sup> e.g. DN 2; 9. MN 77; 79.

## d. The formal greeting between adversaries.

In these dramatic accounts the formal greeting between the adversaries is the final element in the scene-setting before the action of the Debate is begun.

The first encounter between the adversaries is an important moment in an event where the status of each is at stake. There are three degrees of formal greeting in the suttas: simple, elaborate and very elaborate. The simplest greeting is the monks' way of initiating communication with the Buddha. This simply consists of making a salutation and sitting to one side.

18 *bhagavantam abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi.*<sup>43</sup>

This does not occur in debates except as part of the ceremonious formal greeting (see below). Rather, in these are found either a formal greeting in which social pleasantries are indulged in, or a ceremonious formal greeting. The formal greeting which includes social pleasantries is expressed:

19 *Bhagavatā saddhiṃ sammodi sammodanīyaṃ kathaṃ sārāṇīyaṃ vītisāretvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi.*<sup>44</sup>

The ceremonious formal greeting occurs when the adversary is an important brahmin. In this case some among his large group of followers will use one or other of the above formal greetings besides which greetings such as bowing with joined palms, announcing name and clan, or simply remaining silent will occur.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> "He saluted the Buddha and sat to one side." e.g. MN 8 [i 40]; etc.

<sup>44</sup> "He exchanged with the Blessed One the greetings and compliments of politeness and courtesy, and took his seat on one side." (DB I, p. 152). e.g. DN 3, § 9; § 16; 4, § 9; 5, § 8. MN 30; 36; 56; etc.

<sup>45</sup> DN 5, § 8. MN 41; 42; 60.

20 *Atha kho Sāleyyakā brāhmaṇagahapatikā yena Bhagavā ten' upasaṅkamim̐su, upasaṅkamitvā app-ekacce Bhagavantam̐ abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdim̐su, app-ekacce Bhagavatā saddhiṃ sammodim̐su sammodanīyaṃ kathaṃ sārāṇīyaṃ vītisāretvā ekamantaṃ nisīdim̐su, app-ekacce yena Bhagavā ten' añjalim̐ panāmetvā ekamantaṃ nisīsim̐su, app-ekacce Bhagavato santike nāmagottaṃ sāvetaṃ ekamantaṃ nisīdim̐su, app-ekacce tuṅhī-bhūtā ekamantaṃ nisīdim̐su.*<sup>46</sup>

Departures from these formal greetings make a point in the unfolding of the drama. The King Ajātasattu remains standing for a while in the Buddha's presence, expressing his thoughts about his son:<sup>47</sup> reasons of his own history stand between him and spiritual attainment. Ambaṭṭha, a brahman youth, rudely stands around and fidgets:<sup>48</sup> it later turns out that his geneology is not as truly brahmanic as he claims. Kassapa, the naked ascetic, remains standing:<sup>49</sup> this less than usually polite beginning makes his eventual complete conversion more prestigious.

The formal greeting is a means the texts use to characterise the adversary. It is also a way in which they demonstrate the Buddha's prestige. The Buddha receives a greeting as his tribute from an adversary who approaches him. On the occasions where he approaches his

<sup>46</sup> MN 41 [i 285]. "Then the brahman householders of Sālā approached the Lord; some, having approached, having greeted the Lord, sat down at a respectful distance; some exchanged greetings with the Lord; having exchanged greetings of friendliness and courtesy, they sat down at a respectful distance; some, having saluted the Lord with joined palms, sat down at a respectful distance; some, having made known their names and clans in the Lord's presence, sat down at a respectful distance; some, becoming silent, sat down at a respectful distance." (tr. MLS I 343).

<sup>47</sup> DN 2, § 12.

<sup>48</sup> DN 3, § 9.

<sup>49</sup> DN 8, § 1.

adversary, there is no formal greeting. Instead the Buddha begins with the challenging question, “What were you talking about?”<sup>50</sup> In contrast to the monks who always answer this question and then receive a Sermon, the adversary and his group will avoid giving an answer, asking instead their own challenging question.<sup>51</sup>

### iii. The challenge, the refutation and the defeat.

The challenge, the refutation and the defeat in the Buddhist debates conform to the same rules, allowing for the difference in situation, as that in the brahmanical debates.<sup>52</sup>

#### a. The challenge.

The challenge comes in the form of a question. It starts the discussion.

The rules for the challenge are that “two or more persons ... challenge each other to answer certain questions of a ritual or spiritual nature; or one man is challenged by a group of others. This may occur in a private or in (a) public situation ...”.<sup>53</sup> In the Buddhist scriptures usually the Buddha is challenged by an adversary but there are also frequent occasions where he issues the challenge himself.

The type of question that may be asked is also defined. “Normally only well-known — though technically complicated — questions are allowed ...”, and in passages that do not involve a

<sup>50</sup> See “10” above.

<sup>51</sup> e.g. DN 9; MN 77.

<sup>52</sup> The way the Debates are conducted shows that certain “general rules of discussion, rules of challenge and defeat” existed. See Witzel, 1987, 373, 381 foll. In the Buddhist debates there were other specified standards to be kept to as well. See Manné, “The Dīgha Nikāya Debates: Debating practices at the time of the Buddha as demonstrated in the Pāli Canon” (forthcoming in *Buddhist Studies Review*).

<sup>53</sup> Witzel, 1987, 360.

*brahmodya* or ritual discussion, “... the questioning concerns the proper procedure or ritual and its secret, esoteric meaning ...”,<sup>54</sup> or there may be questions concerning other “esoteric, secret knowledge, be it *ātman*, *brahman* or about the *dhamma* (or simply a secret, as in the case of the origin of the clan of Ambaṭṭha which is known only to him and a few others).”<sup>55</sup>

It would serve no purpose in this article to list all the challenges in the Buddhist Debate suttas. The example of Ambaṭṭha’s secret has already been given. Here are some others, chosen at random. In the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (DN 5), the Buddha is asked how to perform a successful sacrifice. In the *Aggi-Vacchagotta Sutta* (MN 72), the Buddha’s views are challenged. In the *Gaṇaka Moggallāna Sutta* (MN 107), the Buddha’s training and its effects are queried. The first (DN 5) is an example of a question of a ritual nature; the others are challenges of a spiritual nature.

#### b. The refutation.

There are rules too regarding the refutation. It is especially the case that “mere brazen assertion does not suffice; one must be able to prove one’s knowledge”.<sup>56</sup>

A contestant cannot avoid a challenge, “one must answer at the third time the question is put ... — one must answer completely, not only partially, — if one does not/cannot answer, death is imminent.”<sup>57</sup> The contestant must either answer or admit insufficient knowledge. If one of these conditions is not fulfilled the contestant suffers the ominous threat of death through the splitting of his head.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Witzel, 1987, 374.

<sup>55</sup> Witzel, 1987, 410.

<sup>56</sup> Witzel, 1987, 373.

<sup>57</sup> Witzel, 1987, 408. See also *ibid.* p. 371.

<sup>58</sup> Witzel, 1987, 375. Witzel provides further conditions under which this threat may arise.

These conditions point to just how daring the Buddha was to create and justify a category of questions that remained unexplained — *avyākāta*.<sup>59</sup>

In terms of literature, the refutations are very lively, containing many strategies, twists and turns which contribute to the drama of the situation.

### c. The defeat.

The rule for the Vedic debates is that “in the course of the discussion participants who do not know the whole truth have to state this clearly, they must cease questioning ... and thus declare defeat, ... or they must become a pupil of the winner”<sup>60</sup> This rule is also followed in the Buddhist texts. The participant who is forced in the course of the debate to admit that he does not know the whole truth stops putting challenging questions and instead is reduced to asking the Buddha to explain the matter to him. In this way he acknowledges that he is defeated.

There is a consequence of conceding defeat: “conceding defeat in a discussion has, of course, the social effect of clearly stated and admitted superiority, of gaining and losing ‘face’ among one’s fellow brahmins and in the tribe at large”.<sup>61</sup> This forms part of the drama in the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta*<sup>62</sup> which makes much of Soṇadaṇḍa’s fears that the Buddha might put to him a challenging question that he would not be able to answer.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> See Warder, 137–50 for a discussion of the philosophical implications of such a category of questions.

<sup>60</sup> Witzel, 1987, 371. See also his discussion of the threat that the adversary’s head will burst.

<sup>61</sup> Witzel, 1987, 373.

<sup>62</sup> DN 4 [i 119, §§ 10–11].

<sup>63</sup> The situation in this sutta suggests that debates between religious leaders of different persuasions were inevitable when they met each other, and that they could not avoid such a meeting without losing their self-respect and the respect of their following.

There are two degrees of defeat in the Buddhist debate suttas. The first may be designated “formal” defeat. In this case the opponent acknowledges the Buddha’s superiority and asks to become a lay disciple. The second degree of defeat is total conversion: the opponent asks to become a bhikkhu. Both degrees of defeat are expressed in formulas. These formulas reflect the degree of commitment with regard to becoming a pupil. The formulas begin:

- 21 “*Abhikkantaṃ bho Gotama, abhikkantaṃ bho Gotama. Seyyathā pi bho Gotama nikkujjitaṃ vā ukkujjeyya, paṭicchannaṃ vā vivareyya, mūlhassa vā maggaṃ ācikkheyya, andhakāre vā tela-pajjotaṃ dhāreyya: ‘cakkhumanto rūpāni dakkhintī ti’, evam eva bhotā Gotamena aneka-pariyāyena dhammo pakāsito. Esāhaṃ Bhagavantaṃ Gotamaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi dhammaṃ ca bhikkhu-saṃghaṃ ca, ...*”<sup>64</sup>

The formula for “formal” defeat continues:

- 22 *upāsakaṃ maṃ bhavaṃ Gotamo dhāretu ajjatagge pāṇupetaṃ saraṇaṃ gataṃ.*<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> “Most excellent, oh Gotama (are the words of thy mouth), most excellent ! Just as if a man were to set up that which has been thrown down, or were to reveal that which has been hidden away, or were to point out the right road to him who has gone astray, or were to bring a light into the darkness so that those who had eyes could see external forms — just even so has the truth been made known to me, in many a figure, by the venerable Gotama.” (tr. DB I 157).

<sup>65</sup> “May the venerable Gotama accept me as a lay-disciple, as one who, from this day forth and as long as I may live, has gone for refuge.”

## Instances:

DN suttas: 2; 3; 4; 5; 10; 12; 13; 14; 23; 31.  
 MN suttas: 27; 41; 58; 60; 72; 73; 74; 80; 84; 85; 91;  
 92; 93 (brief: see fn. in translation); 94; 95; 96; 97; 99;  
 100; 102; 135; 150.

The formula that acknowledges total conversion including the request to be accepted as a monk is:

23 *Labheyyāham bhante Bhagavato santike pabbajjam, labheyyam upasampadan ti.*<sup>66</sup>

## Instances:

DN suttas: 8; 9; 14.  
 MN suttas: 7; 75; 79; 92; 124.

These formulas close the Debate.

## iv. The reward.

Two types of reward are concomitant upon winning the debate. The first, which is a consistent feature of the Debate suttas, is the acquisition of prestigious converts: the opponent and his following, whether as lay-disciples or as monks. It is expressed through the formulas above.

The second type of reward is a less consistent feature. Admissions of defeat are sometimes followed by an invitation to a meal. This is most usual when the adversary is a brahman, but occurs also when the adversary is a Jain.

<sup>66</sup> "And may I be permitted to go forth from the world under the Exalted One; may I receive admission into his Order." (tr. DB I 264).

## Instances:

DN suttas: 3; 4; 5.  
 MN suttas: 35 — this invitation comes from a Jain;  
 91.

The importance of each type of reward to a group of religieus who rely on the lay population for their bodily survival is rather evident.

## Instances of Dramatic Debates.

DN suttas: 2 - 13; 23; 25; 31.  
 Total = 15 = 44.12%  
 MN suttas: 7; 27; 35; 36; 55; 56; 58; 60; 72-77; 79; 80;  
 82; 84; 90-96; 99; 100; 107; 108; 124; 152.  
 Total = 31 = 20.4%

## II. THE REPORTED DEBATE.

The Reported Debate is an account of a Debate that has taken place in the past. It has the same major features as a Dramatic Debate: two opponents, a challenge, a refutation, and a defeat; but there are differences in their expression in the texts. With regard to the opponents in this type of Debate, one is always the Buddha:<sup>67</sup> in the Dramatic Debates the representative of the Buddhist position might be the Buddha himself or a senior monk. The challenges and their refutations in this type of Debate are reported in direct speech as in the Dramatic Debates and conform to the same requirements. The defeat in these Debates is related by the Buddha as part of the account rather than being expressed by the opponent directly through the formulas "21", "22" and "23". It is always

<sup>67</sup> There are many occasions where monks, having been involved in a debate, report the discussion to the Buddha to find out what they should have said, or whether they answered correctly. On these occasions it is the *consultation* of the Buddha by the monk that is the defining feature of the sutta, not the Debate. This type of sutta will be dealt with in the following section.

a defeat in terms of the argument of the refutation, and there is no conversion to the Buddha's Teaching.

Many of the minor features are omitted in these Debates. There is no presentation of the opponents and their credentials, no mention of their social status, their knowledge and attainments, the size of their following, or the formal greeting between them and the Buddha. There is also no mention of any reward.

A Reported Debate may form the basis of a Sermon.

Instances:

DN suttas: 24

MN suttas: 14 (recounted within a Consultation), 49, 101

### III. THE DEBATE WITH POTENTIAL OPPONENTS.

A general feature of many suttas is a paragraph in which an idea or set of ideas of a group with which the Buddha disagrees in general or who may generally disagree with him, are set forth by him, and then the correct position, the Buddha's own, is given. Alternatively, the Buddha may simply contrast himself with these groups, for example, as in the *Bhayabherava Sutta*, MN 4. A few suttas, however, are entirely devoted to disputing a particular idea set forth in this way and these satisfy the criteria for Debate Suttas. In this type of Debate Sutta the Buddha provides both the opponents, the challenge and the refutation. The opponents may be regarded as potential adversaries. They comprise either the rather general group of "wanderers of other sects", *aññatitthiyā paribbājakā*, or that of "some *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas*", *eke samaṇabrāhmaṇā*; or the opponent is the *puṭhujjana*, the "Ordinary Man", i.e. the general representative of the group who have not undertaken any training. The challenge consists of the Buddha's exposition of beliefs which he attributes to a potential adversary. The refutation comprises the

Buddha's arguments against the position of the potential adversary as he has portrayed it.

This type of debate may be placed within Sermon introductory and concluding formulas, in which case it only contains the minimum of Debate features:

Instances:

DN sutta: 1.

MN sutta: 102,

or it may be set out as a Dramatic Debate, with several of the minor formulas, such as that expressing the Buddha's credentials, the elaborate greeting ceremony, and the conversion formula which acknowledges defeat:

Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 60, 150 (*samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas*), 74 (a debate with a wanderer, but the argument is generally directed against *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas*).

### IV. THE REFUSED DEBATE.

There are two occasions where a sutta begins as if it were going to be a Dramatic Debate, and then the Buddha (MN 30) or the monk concerned (MN 125) refuses to take up the challenge. In these cases the Buddha offers a Sermon instead. The monk, however, simply refuses to be questioned with regard to the explanation he has given or will give.

Instances:

DN suttas: 31.

MN suttas: 30; 125.



A challenge issued by the Buddha may also be refused. In the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, DN 31, the householder Sigāla does not respond to the Buddha's challenge with an assertion of his own position. Instead he asks for information and is rewarded with a Sermon. Although the question asked is typical of a Consultation the sutta ends with the Debate conversion formula for lay-discipleship. The internal structure of the sutta, however, shows that it is a Sermon as there are no interruptions.

## V. SUTTAS THAT TEACH DEBATE AND REFUTATION.

Certain suttas teach strategies of debate and refutation. These suttas do not necessarily simply fall into the category of Debates, as the table of instances below shows. In the *Cūḷasihanāda Sutta* (MN 11) and in the *Nagaravindeyya Sutta* (MN 150) the Buddha initiates these instructions. In the first case he is instructing his monks, and in the second some brahman householders on how to refute a challenge that wanderers of other sects (*aññatitthiyā paribbājakā*) might make. In the *Mahā-dukkhakkhandha Sutta* (MN 13) monks who had been challenged by other wanderers and who had been unable to answer the challenge go to the Buddha to have the matter explained.

Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 11 (a Sermon); 13 (a Debate); 150 (a Debate).

## VI. THE DEBATES BETWEEN THE BUDDHA AND A MONK, OR BETWEEN MONKS.

There are occasions where the Buddha challenges the superlative claims a senior monk has made about the Buddha himself or about his

Teaching. In this kind of Debate it is the Buddha who is defeated. He then has to acknowledge that the monk's superlative claims were justified.

Instances:

DN suttas: 28 (Sāriputta)

MN suttas: none.

There is one occasion, the *Rathavinīta Sutta* (MN 24) where one senior monk, Sāriputta, challenges another, Puṇṇa, on a point of the Buddha's Teaching to check if the reputation of the other is warranted. This suggests that monks debated with each other to challenge each other's understanding of the Teaching, and perhaps also to enhance their own prestige.

## 3. CONSULTATIONS.

A sutta can be categorised as a Consultation when the Buddha or a senior monk is resorted to for information or advice. Most usually the person doing the consulting is a monk but there are also occasions where he is a member of a different sect or group. A sutta is also a Consultation when the Buddha himself, or a senior monk, initiates the conversation.

Consultations have features in common with both Sermons and Debates.

A Consultation may be introduced in the same way as a Sermon, with minimal scene-setting: just a simple statement of the location and the brief introduction by name and social group (monk, brahman, householder, etc.) of the person who is consulting the Buddha, or it may be introduced in the same way as a Debate, with elaborate scene-setting including the description of some event or the recounting of some anecdote.

The formal greeting in a Consultation is almost always the simplest.<sup>68</sup> It is made both by monks and by others (gahapati, MN 52; Licchavis, MN 105; etc.). The very few exceptions where the more elaborate formal greeting is used occur when the person making the Consultation is a brahman or an ascetic.

Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 4; 52; 57; 97; 98.

A Consultation begins with a question. When a monk consults the Buddha or the Buddha initiates some interaction with a monk, there is no problem with regard to categorising the sutta as a Consultation. Where, however, someone who is not a monk approaches the Buddha and asks him a question there are criteria through which this type of question and the question that forms the challenge of a Debate can be distinguished. One is, rather self-evidently, the nature of the question; another is the nature of the questioner's response to the Buddha's answer. In a Debate the Buddha's answer to the challenge is argued against as part of the debating procedure; in a Consultation, the Buddha's answer is invariably accepted. Further questions may be asked, but a different position is never put forward.

The procedure of a Consultation is that it may take the form of a dialogue, or the Buddha may respond with a Sermon. The Sermon may be introduced by the usual formula for the introduction of a Sermon in the middle of a sutta ("3"), or it may be evident because of the structure of the passage (see Internal Sermon Structure 1.5, above).

A Consultation ends most usually with the same closing formula as a Sermon. There are, however, instances where a Consultation ends with the concluding formula that acknowledges defeat

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<sup>68</sup> See Section ii.d. under Dramatic Debates.

in a Debate ("21" and "22", or "23"). Such occasions can only occur where the person consulting is not a monk, i.e. he is not already a convert. These instances suggest that however innocent the question may seem, one may always suspect some proximity to a Debate when the Buddha is consulted by someone who is not a monk, and when the sutta ends in a defeat formula. In this type of sutta there is often reference to potential adversaries, even when the reference is sudden and intrusive and unconnected with the main theme of the sutta (e.g. the *Bhayabherava Sutta*, MN 4).

Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 4 (*upāsaka*); 57 (*upāsaka, paribbājaka*); 73 (*upāsaka*); 98 (*upāsaka*).

Consultations fall into distinct categories. Where the Buddha, or a senior monk, is consulted these include requests for teaching, requests for guidance with the practice, requests for the approval of the Buddha for some other monk's exposition of his Teaching. Where it is the Buddha, or senior monk, who initiates the interaction, this may be in order to check the progress of the other, to drill the other in the Teaching, or to reprimand the other.

### 3.1. In the following categories the Buddha is consulted.

#### i. Requests for clarification regarding the Teaching.

This is the largest category of Consultation.<sup>69</sup> In this type of Consultation a monk or a non-Buddhist (brahman, householder, etc.) goes

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<sup>69</sup> As suttas frequently contain different types of Consultation, I am where necessary giving both page and line numbers in this section.

goes to the Buddha for information regarding the Teaching. This may be a simple request for general information<sup>70</sup> or it may be in order to attain clarity on a particular aspect of the teaching.<sup>71</sup> Clarification might similarly be sought regarding the meaning of a parable,<sup>72</sup> claims made about the Buddha's capacities and conduct,<sup>73</sup> or the relationship between the Buddha's qualities and those of other monks.<sup>74</sup> There is also a request for information about the consequences of attainments,<sup>75</sup> and a request for the Buddha's judgment on the best kind of monk.<sup>76</sup> Further, the Buddha is consulted on the authenticity of some monk's claims to high attainment.<sup>77</sup>

Various people and beings — monks, non-monks, yakkhas — may ask each other if they remember a particular discourse.<sup>78</sup> They may request from each other expositions in detail of Sermons given in brief by the Buddha. In these cases, the consultation is simply the means to introduce a Sermon.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>70</sup> E.g. the *Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta*, MN 52; the *Anuruddha Sutta*, MN 127.

<sup>71</sup> E.g. the *Cūḷataṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta*, MN 37; the *Mahāvedalla Sutta*, MN 43; the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta*, MN 44 [i 304,26]; the *Bahuvedanīya Sutta*, MN 59; the *Āṇaṅjasappāya Sutta*, MN 106 [This is a consultation based on a point made in a Sermon. The sutta therefore contains both a Sermon, and the ensuing discussion: a Consultation]; the *Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta*, MN 109; the *Bahudhātuka Sutta*, MN 115; the *Cūḷasuṅṅhata Sutta*, MN 121; the *Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta*, MN 136.

<sup>72</sup> E.g. the *Vammika Sutta*, MN 23.

<sup>73</sup> E.g. the *Tevijja-Vacchagotta Sutta*, MN 71 [i 482]; the *Bāhitika Sutta*, MN 88.

<sup>74</sup> The *Gopakamoggallāna Sutta*, MN 108. This consultation becomes a debate.

<sup>75</sup> The *Tevijja-Vacchagotta Sutta*, MN 71 [i 483].

<sup>76</sup> The *Mahāgosiṅga Sutta*, MN 32.

<sup>77</sup> The *Sunakkhatta Sutta*, MN 105.

<sup>78</sup> The *Mahākannānabhaddekaratta Sutta*, MN 133 [iii 192]; the *Lomasakaṅgiya-bhaddekaratta Sutta*, MN 134 [iii 199].

<sup>79</sup> E.g. the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*, MN 18; the *Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta Sutta*, MN 133 [iii 194].

Instances:

DN suttas: none

MN suttas — monk: 18; 23; 32; 37; 43; 44; 59; 63; 81; 83; 104; 109; 115; 121; 133; 134; 136.

— other: 52; 57; 71; 73; 78; 88; 98; 105; 108; 127.

## ii. Requests for guidance with the practice.

These rare suttas may perhaps offer authentic information regarding some of the problems encountered by those practising the Buddha's method. There are requests for guidance on practical problems, such as the problem of getting rid of particular ideas (the *Sallekha Sutta*, MN 8), or coping with the problem of personal greed (the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha Sutta*, MN 14).

## iii. Requests for confirmation that the Buddha agrees with some other monk's exposition of his Teaching.

The Buddha may be consulted as to whether or not he agrees with some other monk's exposition of his Teaching (the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta*, MN 44 [i 304], or a monk may himself check that he has correctly explained the Teaching (the *Bhūmija Sutta*, 46).

## iv. A monk consults the Buddha on a challenge.

These are the occasions where a monk has been challenged but has been unable to respond and to enter a debate. The monk then consults the Buddha on the correct answer. In the *Mahāsihanāda Sutta*, MN 12, the Buddha's response is the same type of bravura exposition as occurs in a dramatic Debate, including both an assertion of his attainments and a demonstration of his knowledge.

## Instances

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 12; 13;<sup>80</sup> 78.

## v. The Buddha's opinion is sought variously.

The Buddha's opinion is sought on various subjects: two ascetics ask about their likely fate after death (the *Kukkuravatika Sutta*, MN 57); the brahmins Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja ask the Buddha to settle their discussion on how one is a brahmin (the *Vāseṭṭha Sutta*, MN 98); Ānanda asks how the order can be protected from breaking into disputes after the Buddha's death (the *Sāmagāma Sutta*, MN 104).

## Instances

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 57; 98; 104.

## 3.2. In the following categories the Buddha initiates the consultation.

## vi. Progress is checked.

This type of Consultation in which the Buddha personally checks a monk's progress presents an interesting aspect of his teaching activities. This sort of checking is not limited to junior monks: in the *Piṇḍapātapārisuddhi Sutta* (MN 151) the Buddha checks Sāriputta's progress; nor is it limited to monks: in the *Dhānañjāni Sutta* (MN 97), Sāriputta checks the practice and progress of the brahmin Dhānañjāni.

<sup>80</sup> This sutta teaches Debate strategy. See Section V under Debates.

## Instances.

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 31; 68; 97; 128 [iii 155];<sup>81</sup> 151.

## vii. The Buddha drills a monk (the monks) in the Teaching.

In this type of Consultation the Buddha drills a monk or a group of the monks to make sure that they have grasped an aspect of his Teaching. Here again it is not only the ordinary monks who are drilled. Sāriputta and Moggallāna too are subjected to this form of treatment (*Cātuma Sutta*, MN 67)

## Instances

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 22 [i 133]; 38 [i 258]; 67.

## viii. The Buddha reprimands a monk.

This type of sutta is introduced by a tale-telling episode. Some monk tells the Buddha that the behaviour of another is unsatisfactory or that another is holding and proclaiming a wrong view. The Buddha is also told that a group of monks has become quarrelsome and he attempts to sort them out (*Kosambiya Sutta*, MN 48).

## Instances:

DN suttas: none.

MN suttas: 21; 22 [i 132]; 38 [i 258]; 48; 70; 128 [i 253].

<sup>81</sup> The three suttas, MN 32, 68, 128 [iii 155], concern a group practising intensely together who are referred to collectively by the name of one of them as *Anuruddhas*.

## ix. The Buddha teaches Rāhula.

It seems that the Buddha was particularly assiduous in his concern for Rāhula's progress. In three suttas (the *Ambalaṭṭhikā-Rāhulovāda Sutta*, MN 61; the *Mahā-Rāhulovāda Sutta*, MN 62; the *Cūḷarāhulovāda Sutta*, MN 147) he goes to find Rāhula especially to teach him. These episodes of teaching take the form of Consultations.

## x. The Buddha checks that a particular discourse has been given.

The Buddha is depicted as being particularly concerned that the discourse of the Auspicious (*bhaddekaratta*) should have been given (MN 132).

## xi. Social Consultations.

It seems that visits to sick monks or followers were regularly requested and carried out. In the *Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta* (MN 143) the householder Anāthapiṇḍika who is ill asks Sāriputta to call on him. In the *Channovāda Sutta* (MN 144) Sāriputta and Cunda decide to call on the monk Channa who is ill. In both cases there is a discussion with the sick person regarding how he is coping with his illness, and he is offered Teaching on how to sustain himself.

## DISCUSSION

In this section the following issues will be discussed: (1) the authenticity of these categories; (2) the implications of these categories for our understanding of the Buddhist Teaching; (3) the implications of these categories for our understanding of the different purposes of Dīgha and Majjhima Nikāya; (4) the contribution of these categories with regard

to distinguishing textual units; and the relationship of the Buddha's times to our own.

### 1. The authenticity of these categories.

How far are the categories "Sermon", "Debate" and "Consultation" authentic? Do these categories represent types of oral literature that go back to the time of the Buddha or must they be considered to be a convenient literary invention of the early monks and the redactors?

Common sense supports the reasonableness of the categories "Sermon" and "Consultation". It seems hard to doubt that the Buddha, in his role of religious leader, preached Sermons and gave Consultations. This statement makes no claim that the existing material is an historically accurate record of the exact words and themes of the Sermons the Buddha preached or the exact words and themes of the Consultations that he gave.<sup>82</sup> It merely says that it is rather likely that he did both. This also means that it is difficult to suspect the redactors of having invented and created these forms. Whether or not they invented them, it is certain that they exploited them in the service of (their school of) the religion.<sup>83</sup>

The authenticity of the Debate as an old Indian genre of oral literature is not in question,<sup>84</sup> and the Buddhists may have needed some of these types of texts in order to compete with their existence in the Vedic

<sup>82</sup> I see no way of definitively distinguishing Buddha-style from *bhānaka*-style. Even a perfect collating back as far as possible using all the existing texts can never achieve this.

<sup>83</sup> Warder, who treats the different genres of literature in the Pali Canon according to the criteria of Sanskrit *kāvya* literature, says, "This canon, ... (includes) a substantial amount of poetry and some prose stories ... Though these are applied to propaganda purposes, they are clearly adaptations or applications of the techniques of the secular poetry and story-telling of their day ... " (§ 536). Warder (§ 608) includes in his category "story-telling" suttas that are here categorised as debates, e.g. the *Pāyāsi Sutta*, DN 23.

<sup>84</sup> Witzel, 1987, 385.

texts. They may have needed to present their religious leader the way that the brahman sages were represented: as a champion of debate in order to enhance his credibility.<sup>85</sup> Although the redactors of the Buddhist texts cannot be accredited with the invention of this genre the accounts of some of these Debates are such wonderful stories that one may suspect the improving tendencies of a series of good raconteurs.

A further fact that supports the authenticity of the categories Sermon, Consultation and Debate is their consistency throughout the Nikayas. This study has been based on DN and MN because these are the “story-tellers” collections. The formulas and literary features are clearest and most regularly complete in them. They appear consistently too, however, in the AN and also in the SN where, even though they occur in increasingly abbreviated form, they are nevertheless retained. Furthermore in this collection (the SN) the same Teaching will frequently be repeated in more than one of these three categories.<sup>86</sup>

The above suggests two things. The first is that the categories were important and had to be respected and recorded by the early redactors. Had this not been the case the abbreviated style of the SN could easily have justified their omission. The second is that Teachings that appeared in different categories of sutta were differently regarded. Hence the importance of retaining the mode or modes in which a particular Teaching was presented.

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. Frauwallner on the creation of “the lists of teachers of the Vinaya” being “on the pattern of and as a counterpart to the Vedic lists of teachers, in order to bestow on the own tradition an authority similar to the Vedic one”. (1956, 62)

<sup>86</sup> e.g. SN iv 219, § 15 is a Consultation whose teaching is repeated in § 16 (p. 221) as a Sermon. SN v 70, § 4 (4) is a Sermon, § 5 (p. 72) is a Consultation, and § 6 (p. 73) is a Debate, all on the same subject. etc.

## 2. The implications of these categories for our understanding of the Teaching.

There are, in the Pāli Canon, suttas that factually and drily convey the Teaching, suttas which present it by means of drama or poetry, suttas that present it through discussion, and so forth. In our own culture we would rightly give different weight to information packaged in different ways. A factual, dry account contains a different quality of information: clearer, more precise, more categorical; compared with that presented as part of a theatrical production or a poetry recitation. We would accept more readily the impartial arguments of a good scholar to those put forward by politicians in debate: we would recognise the politician’s purposes. Different genres of literature, therefore, arouse different expectations. Sermons may be expected to convey information most directly and clearly; Consultations show the problems that arose and how they were dealt with and solved. Both of these seem rather reliable forms for conveying information (although one can never exclude later manipulation by the redactors). Debates, however, are quite a different category. These are the records, slanted no doubt in the Buddha’s favour, of public events. They are entertainments for the purpose of propaganda. They serve also to teach the monks how to refute challenges that were, presumably, regularly being made. It is therefore only right that we give the correct weighting to these distinct genres of literature from another culture.

At some point in the history of Buddhism, undoubtedly for good reasons and probably for historically authentic ones, different aspects of the Teaching were presented and communicated in different forms of (oral) literature. It is, however, a frequent custom in research to treat the contents of the Nikāyas and even of the entire Pāli canon as homogenous. In research of this type, occurrences of one particular idea or theme are collected no matter where they occur in the Canon, and an attempt is made to understand them as a single group, a coherent whole. This method treats this enormous body of different types of texts as if it were

all one and the same genre of literature, and therefore that all its various messages, no matter in what genre they be conveyed, have the same weight. This is not even the the case in the very largest scale, as the discussions about the concept *atta* show.<sup>87</sup> Although this kind of work can be coherent, meaningful and very successful<sup>88</sup>, more usually it is unclear and leads simply to an exposition of the writer(-believer)'s own interpretation of what Buddhism is. Looking, therefore, beyond this most general view, we can see that the establishment of these different categories of *sutta* (and the existence of others not treated in this paper) requires that each category be respected and given an appropriate weighting in future research.

### 3. The implications of these categories for our understanding of the different purposes of the MN and the DN.

The purposes of SN and AN have been described and accounted for thus:

“ ... the early existence of some kind of Abhidharma would explain the peculiar shape of the *Sūtrapiṭaka*, or rather of two sections of it, the *Samyuktāgama*/P. *Samyutta Nikāya* and the *Ekottarāgama*/P. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. The former arranges traditional utterances ascribed to the Buddha subject-wise; the latter follows a scheme determined by the number of subdivisions in the items discussed.”<sup>89</sup>

The difference between these texts and the MN and DN is clear and incontrovertible. The question is whether this research into categories of *sutta* can give insight into the purposes of the DN and the MN, and

<sup>87</sup> See Oetke, 1988. See also Bronkhorst's review of Oetke (Bronkhorst, 1989a).

<sup>88</sup> e.g. Bronkhorst, 1986.

<sup>89</sup> Bronkhorst, 1985, 316.

especially whether it can enable a distinction to be made regarding the purpose of these two works. For instance, it makes sense that a straight sermon to the monks might be expected to contain the Teaching in its most essential form. A Consultation may be expected to show the Teaching spontaneously developing in response to a particular situation and a particular problem.<sup>90</sup> A Debate, however, may be regarded as an exercise in publicity. It is an opportunity for propaganda. Something is always at stake. Not only must the best question be asked, and the best answer be given, but converts must be won and lay support must be gained. Under these circumstances we may expect that, appropriate to the situation, a particular presentation of the Teaching is given. We may expect this to be religiously sound, but exaggerated, because the Debates were public competitive occasions. If the distribution of these different types of *suttas* between these two collections should show a clear distinction between them we may then be able to propose that each of the first four Nikāyas came about in order to serve a distinct need and purpose in the growing and developing Buddhist community, and we may also then be able to define the function of these two collections.

Statistics usefully show up the different characters of MN and DN.

### The Statistics.

The statistics that this analysis supplies are rather surprising in their implications. For this reason I have been particularly stringent regarding which *suttas* should count for statistical purposes, and which should be omitted. Where I thought there was any room for doubt with regard to categorisation I did not include the *sutta*. I have indicated my criteria under each heading. Composite *suttas*, i.e. Debates that become Sermons, Sermons that become Consultations, and so forth, have been

<sup>90</sup> On the Buddha's teaching style see Kloppenborg, 1989.

systematically omitted. This means that the results here are systematically minimised, and therefore all the more convincing.

### i. SERMONS.

A Sermon is here defined as a sutta which has both a standard introductory formula (“1” or “2”) and a standard concluding formula, and the Sermon internal structure. This is the definition which will include the smallest number of suttas in this category.

DN Sermons: 1; 14; 22; 26; 30; 32; 33; 34.

Total: 8 / 34.

Percentage of suttas in DN: 23.53%.

MN Sermons: 1 - 3 (contains 2 such sermons); 6; 10; 11; 15 - 20; 25; 27; 33; 34; 39; 40; 45 - 47; 51; 53; 64; 67; 68; 102; 103; 105; 106; 110 - 113; 117; 118 - 120; 122; 123; 129; 130; 131 - 134; 136 - 141; 145; 146; 149; 152.

Total: 57 / 152.

Percentage of suttas in MN: 36.8%.

Result:

The percentage of Sermons in the MN is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times greater than that in the DN.

### ii. CONSULTATIONS.

Only suttas in which a member of the Order consults the Buddha are included here. This is to avoid the need to justify at length the categorisation as Consultations rather than as Debates of those occasions where someone who is not a monk consults the Buddha.

DN Consultations: 29.

Total: 1 / 34.

Percentage: 2.94%.

MN Consultations: 8; 12; 13; 18; 21; 22; 23; 31; 32; 37; 38; 43; 44; 48; 59; 61; 62; 63; 65; 66; 67; 68; 70; 73; 78; 81; 83; 97; 104; 106; 109; 115; 121; 122; 125; 126; 128; 132; 133; 134; 136; 144; 146; 151.

Total: 44 / 152.

Percentage: 29.94%.

Result:

The percentage of Consultations in the MN is ten times greater than that in the DN.

### iii. DEBATES.

The criteria for suttas to be included here as Debates are that there must be a clear challenge, the challenge must be disputed, and there must be an acknowledged defeat, or the Debate must be a reported Debate or a Debate with potential opponents. Debates between monks are excluded, as are those suttas that start as a Debate but finish in some other way, such as refused Debates.

DN Debates: 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 23; 24; 25; 28; 31.

Total: 18 / 34.

Percentage: 52.94%.



MN Debates: 7; 14; 27; 30; 35; 36; 56; 58; 60; 72;  
74; 75; 76; 79; 80; 84; 90; 91; 92;  
93; 94; 95; 96; 99; 100; 101; 102;  
107; 124.

Total: 29 / 152.

Percentage: 19%.

#### Result:

The percentage of Debates in the DN is more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times greater than that in the MN.

These statistics show that the MN contains proportionately a greater number of Sermons and Consultations than the DN and a proportionately fewer number of Debates. How can this be accounted for ?

The tradition holds that suttas were assigned to the MN and DN according to their length at the first council.<sup>91</sup> If we accept this then all that these statistics show is that, because there are more Debates in the DN, Debates are usually longer than Sermons and Consultations. This is a possible explanation but it seems also rather superficial and arguments can be brought forward against it.

The legend of the first Council in the Pāli Vināya that holds that Ānanda recited the Sutta Piṭaka, and therefore each of the Nikāyas as we know them today, is generally held to be untenable.<sup>92</sup> On this ground we may dismiss any idea that in an extraordinary feat of mental sorting Ānanda achieved this relationship at that time (or that he was purposefully and intentionally organising the suttas in this way as he memorised them in his position as the Buddha's chief attendant). In any case the practicalities of such a sorting in the absence of writing are

<sup>91</sup> Norman, 1983, 30. See Horner, 1954, x for further discussion.

<sup>92</sup> Lamotte, 1958, 141 foll.

unimaginable. Staal has produced a fantasy about how Pāṇini's grammar could have been composed orally. It imaginatively involves hordes of pupils who, acting as living note-books, memorise relevant portions of the work in progress.<sup>93</sup> As Bronkhorst has said, it is a charming invention, and an implausible speculation.<sup>94</sup> The monumental task of re-sorting orally-learned texts in the absence of writing makes it extremely unlikely that this legend contains a grain of truth.

The notion that texts were re-sorted orally brings with it further problems, not the least of which is the problem of attachment — so fundamental to human nature and so important in this literature. The Vinaya account of the first Council attests to the attachment of the monk Purāṇa to the version of the Teaching he had heard from the Buddha above that offered to him by the Council.<sup>95</sup> It is unlikely that Purāṇa stood alone. People do not so easily give up features of their religion or system of belief or accept a different version of it or make compromises. The differences between the Dīgha-*bhāṇakas* and the Majjhima-*bhāṇakas* regarding the constitution of the Khuddaka Nikāya testifies to this.<sup>96</sup>

How, then, did the collections get their earliest form ? Norman describes the situation after the second council when the collections had begun to be formed and the schools were still in contact.

“The fact that one and the same *sutta* is sometimes found in more than one *nikāya* in the Pāli canon would seem to indicate that the *bhāṇakas* of the various *nikāyas* could not always agree about the allocation of *suttas*. The fact that the *sūtras* in each Sanskrit *āgama* do not coincide with their Pāli equivalents would seem to indicate that each school had its own *bhāṇakas* who while all agreeing in general with the other *bhāṇakas* of their

<sup>93</sup> Staal, 1986, 37 foll.

<sup>94</sup> Bronkhorst, 1989.

<sup>95</sup> Vin ii 289 foll.

<sup>96</sup> Norman, 1983, 31 foll.

own and other sects, nevertheless preferred to differ over the placing of some *sūtras*. This suggests that there was in early times a large collection of *suttas* which were remembered by heart, and the task of allocating them to the various *nikāyas/bhāṇakas* had not been finished or the allocation completely agreed, by the time the schools began to separate."<sup>97</sup>

It is thus more likely that originally *suttas* came to be remembered in different groups or sets rather spontaneously and naturally in response to the exigencies of particular situations and requirements, and that these groups form the cores of the different *Nikāyas* as we know them today.

What could those exigencies that brought about the form of the collections have been? The early Buddhists had two important and urgent purposes. One was to gain converts and lay support; the other was to ensure the survival of their religion. Without success in both of these their Teaching would die out. How were they to realise these purposes? Obviously a body of (oral) literature was necessary. To attract converts the early Buddhists first needed an audience. For that their initial communications had at least to be attractive and entertaining. Of the first four *Nikāyas* by far the most entertaining texts occur in the DN.<sup>98</sup> The most dramatic Debates are there, for example in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (DN 2), the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* (DN 3), and the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* (DN 4); and the most philosophical debates, e.g. in the *Kassapa Sihanāda Sutta* (DN 9) and the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* (DN 9). The most magical and

<sup>97</sup> Norman, 1983, 31.

<sup>98</sup> Monks would, of course, not have been excluded from this entertainment. Without radio or TV, society at the time of the Buddha was dependent on locally generated entertainment. The *Brahmajāla Sutta* (DN 1) gives a rather full catalogue of what was available. But monks were excluded from or at least discouraged from participating in all of these forms. Only one form of entertainment was available to them: the hearing and reciting of *suttas*. The *Brahmajāla Sutta* leaves nothing over but this, I think.

inspirational legends are also found there, for instance that of the lives of Buddhas in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* (DN 14); the legend of King Mahāvijita's sacrifice in the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (DN 5); the legend of Brahmā's respect for the Buddha in the *Kevaladdha Sutta* (DN 11); the history of the town Kusinārā in the *Mahāsudassana Sutta* (DN 17); the Buddha's encounter with the *gandhabba* Janavasabha, the claimed reincarnation of King Bimbisāra, with its tale of rebirth and life among the gods (DN 18); and so forth. My argument is that for the purposes of propaganda, to attract converts and lay-supporters to the new religion and to spread its message, it was necessary to have a particular type of communication. This would have had to be entertaining: viz., stories and accounts capable of spreading the fame of the founder, of giving some idea of his character and attainments, of providing enough of the Teaching to arouse interest and to inspire conversion, and, not the least, containing accounts of converts and supporters from many different areas of society to serve as examples to the present audience. The *Dīgha Nikāya* conforms to this requirement. This may be why the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* found its way into this collection.

There are further statistics which support this position. These concern a comparison between the target groups of the *Dīgha* and *Majjhima Nikāyas*. The DN was not particularly a collection for the monks. Of the 34 DN *suttas* only 9, i.e. 26.4% are directed towards *bhikkhus*. The other 73.4% are directed towards brahmans (11 *suttas* = 32.3%), *paribbājakas* (5 *suttas* = 14.7%), and variously towards kings, *kṣatriyas*, *acelas*, *Licchavis*, gods, *yakkhas* and *gandhabbas*. By comparison, in the MN 92 of the 152 *suttas*, i.e. 60.5%, are directed only towards the monks.

The contents of the MN suggest that it had as its purpose the presentation of the Leader, both as a real person and as an archetype (a *Tathāgata*), and the integration of new monks into the community and into the practice. Most of the intimate biographical *suttas* appear in this

Nikāya<sup>99</sup> (MN 19, 26) as well as suttas about the Tathāgata and how to relate to him (how to study the Tathāgata, *Vimamsaka Sutta*, MN 47; the nature of the Tathāgata, *Naḷakapāna Sutta*, MN 68; the Tathāgata's wonderful qualities: *Acchariyabbhutadhamma Sutta*, MN 123). There are suttas teaching the monks how to live together peacefully (*Kosambiya Sutta*, MN 48), how to settle disputes about what the Buddha taught (*Kinti Sutta*, MN 103), what the right eating habits are to follow (*Bhaddāli Sutta*, MN 66), and how forest monks should adjust their behaviour when they return to the community (*Gulissāni Sutta*, MN 69). There is a sutta on the way of the learner (*Sekha Sutta*, MN 53). There are suttas on the technicalities of the Teaching: how to practise (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, MN 10), how to control thoughts (*Dvedhāvitakka Sutta*, MN 19), how perception works (*Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*, MN 18), what hindrances are and how to get rid of them (*Cūla-Assapura Sutta*, MN 40), how to deal with the sense pleasures, (*Āṇaṅjasappāya Sutta*, MN 106), how to practise the Eightfold Path (*Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*, MN 117), how to train character (*A numāna Sutta*, MN 15) and so forth. All of the technicalities of the Teaching appear here in detail, whether taught directly or within an account of a conversation, and especially with regard to what they are and how they are to be dealt with in practice. There are also Sermons on problems connected with the practice and its difficulty: on the problems of meditation in a forest and when to give it up (*Vanapattha Sutta*, MN 19), on pitfalls along the Path (*Mahāsāropama Sutta*, MN 29), on how to test whether one has truly attained the goal (*Chabbisodhana Sutta*, MN 112).

These facts suggest a general pattern. DN and MN clearly have different and complementary characters. Without denying the inclusion of additional, later suttas over time, and perhaps also under a different system of categorisation, and, similarly, without denying some

<sup>99</sup> The intimate biographical suttas would have had the important function of introducing the monks to the personal side of the founder, so that they could get to know him personally or at least feel that they were doing that.

movement of texts from one to the other<sup>100</sup> and reduplication of each other's texts, the general trend suggests that indeed the collection now known as the Dīgha Nikāya derived from an original, probably spontaneously created, collection of publicity material for the early Buddhists, while the collection now known as the Majjhima Nikāya was the collection which arose to serve their need to introduce new converts to the character of the Leader, the Buddha, and the important disciples, to integrate new converts into their values and their way of life, and to provide them with the fundamentals of the Teaching and the Practice.<sup>101</sup> We thus see that the first four Nikāyas reflect the need of the Early Buddhists to convey, study and systematise their Doctrine at increasingly deeper levels.

#### 4. The contribution of these categories for distinguishing textual units.

The existence of these three distinct categories of sutta, each with own unique structure, needs to be taken into account in any attempt to define the original suttas that the Buddha taught. It has implications with regard to the scientific view of long suttas, of frequently occurring pericopes, and of the integrity of individual suttas.

The view that long suttas are late amalgams of authentic material has been expressed.<sup>102</sup> This is in spite of the fact that suttas exist which testify to night-long marathons of Teaching, with Ānanda taking over when the Buddha had become weary.<sup>103</sup> Clearly a great deal of material can be united into a night-long sutta. If one accepts the antiquity of the category of Debate suttas then one must accept that long suttas are not necessarily amalgams of "bits" of the Teaching.

<sup>100</sup> Pande, 1974, 78.2

<sup>101</sup> See Dutt, 1925, 114 foll. and 1970, 44 foll. for the early custom and practice of specialising in the memorisation of particular types of texts.

<sup>102</sup> Pande, 1974; etc.

<sup>103</sup> e.g. *Sekha Sutta*, MN 53.

There is also the tendency to see the “bits” of the Teaching, or pericopes as “original Buddhism”. Once again the category of Debate sutta requires that this view be revised. It is on the contrary likely that the pericopes in these suttas are their original features, necessitated by their structure and function.

Finally, as the strict literary style of these suttas adheres consistently to the use of clearly categorisable formulas and clearly definable internal structures and uses these for demarcation, we may make some factually supported statements about insertions. We may say that, e.g. because the appearance of formula “1” or “2” in the middle of a sutta is so rare, the cases where it does occur may indicate that in the course of time two distinct Sermons have become merged.<sup>104</sup> We can, unfortunately, never be entirely certain that the suttas do not represent an occasion when the very two Sermons were given consecutively.

The case is very much clearer with regard to Debates because of their uniformity of structure and the formal exigencies of the debate situation. We may hypothesize with confidence, therefore, that two debates suttas, the *Mahāli Sutta* (DN 6) and the *Jāliya Sutta* (DN 7), have lost important parts. The *Mahāli Sutta* begins in a similar way to other debates with important brahmins. It begins with the information that there were many important brahmins in the area at that time,<sup>105</sup> and then continues with a statement of the Buddha’s credentials.<sup>106</sup> It then incorporates what could easily be the beginning of a different debate: the introduction of a different adversary, Oṭṭhadda, the Licchavi, with his followers. In the debate that follows, however, the brahmins are forgotten. Their role is never shown. Instead, the debate that is recorded is with Oṭṭhadda, the Licchavi. Then, in the middle of this debate, there is introduced rather suddenly a quite separate debate which is both thematically different and also a debate of a different type, namely, a

<sup>104</sup> E.g. the *Dhammadāyada Sutta*, MN 3.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. the *Tevijja Sutta*, DN 13.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta*, DN 4; the *Kūṭadanta Sutta*, DN 5; etc.

Reported Debate. At the end of this debate, in conformity with the style of the Reported Debate, there is no formula acknowledging defeat (cf. formulas “21”, “22”, “23”), but instead the type of acknowledgement formula (“13”) that monks give at the end of a Sermon or Consultation. It appears here that either the Debate with the brahmins that the *Mahāli Sutta* leads us to expect has been lost in time, or a recitor/redactor has introduced this beginning without realising its implications, i.e. at a later time when the literary conventions and their implications had been forgotten. The *Jāliya Sutta*, DN 7, moreover, comprises just this Reported Debate, only given “live”, so to speak, i.e. not reported, but in the form of a Dramatic Debate. In this account, because it is a Dramatic Debate, one would expect the defeat formulas. The ascetics of DN 7, however, do not become converts. This is at odds with the formulaic and conforming nature of this genre of Debate.

## Conclusion.

To study these texts is to be open to their qualities as literature: to their capacity to convey a Teaching convincingly; to their capacity to tell a story, and to their capacity to depict a culture. It is also to be curious, to wonder what sort of a society, what sort of times make the success of a Buddha possible?

In doing this work I could not but be struck by the way the Buddha is depicted to have lived his life and fulfilled his tasks as a religious leader: setting a convincing example, Teaching (in the form of Sermons), being available for Consultations, participating actively also in the society of his time as a Debater, and also taking time to maintain his own meditation and practice. I also found remarkable the depiction of the Buddha as a religious leader among other religious leaders — large numbers of them more or less successfully (the remaining literature shows which were the successful ones<sup>107</sup>) — fulfilling this archetypal

<sup>107</sup> Basham, 1951.

role. And I wondered whether the great contemporary upsurge of interest in Buddhism, both experiential and scientific,<sup>108</sup> and in all other forms of personal growth and spiritual development, has not come about because the times we are living in right now and the times of the Buddha have indeed certain similarities. Some people call our times “the New Age”, meaning an age of increasing spiritual awareness emerging from a previous age of materialism and struggle for survival. Buddhism, Jainism, Ājivikas, Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads — don’t these all suggest that Buddhism arose in similar times ?

La Conversion

Joy Manné

<sup>108</sup> See the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* for many articles on this subject.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Texts as in Bechert, 1988.

DB = Dialogues of the Buddha (Rhys Davids, 1899)

MLS = Middle Length Sayings (Horner, 1954)

tr. = translation

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