Studia Indologica Universitatis Halensis 31

Anthony Fiorucci

Guilty Pleasures

Kāma in ancient India and the Pali Vinaya



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Band 31

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Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

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For the women who raised me
Diane, Penny, Dorothy and Faye

Foreword

With this book, Anthony Fiorucci makes a critical contribution to our understanding of ancient Indian cultural history and its relation to Buddhist doctrine, ethics, and monastic discipline, primarily through a careful and detailed study of canonical Pali texts, with a focus on the Theravāda or Pali *Vinaya*.

Specifically, this book is concerned with the study of *kāma*, defined as 'sensuality' and 'sensual pleasure', and its relation to not only early Buddhist thought and doctrine but also Buddhist monasticism and monastic discipline. The book investigates how *kāma* was understood in ancient India during the period in which canonical Pali texts were composed and collated, how *kāma* is treated in normative Buddhist doctrine, and how the practices and ideas associated with *kāma* and normative Buddhist doctrines are in turn reflected in the Pali *Vinaya*. In other words, what role do both ancient Indian and specifically Buddhist conceptions of *kāma* play in the Buddhist monastic discipline preserved in Pali? While conceptions of, and practices related to, *kāma* in ancient India have been the focus of numerous studies, as have Buddhist notions and regulations concerning, especially, sex and sexuality, this book for the first time systematically surveys and analyses *kāma*, in its broadest sense, in canonical Pali texts and critically examines its role in Pali Buddhist monastic discipline.

Fiorucci builds his investigation on an impressive array of sources in Pali and Sanskrit, surveying and analyzing not only the *Sutta Piṭaka* and *Vinaya Piṭaka*, but also relevant non-Buddhist texts, from the *Ṛgveda* to the *Kāmasūtra*. Tracing the development of conceptions of *kāma* from Vedic literature and society, he argues that cosmopolitan conceptions of *kāma* as 'sensuality' emerge with processes of urbanization, political centralization, increased commerce, and discrepancies in wealth distribution in the final centuries preceding the Common Era. With new patterns of elite material consumption emerging among royalty and the urban upper classes, social stratification and aggravated class divisions were conceived in terms of a social distribution of 'sensual pleasure' or *kāma*. This uneven distribution of wealth and pleasure, being two sides of the same coin, is shown to be legitimated in Buddhist ethical discourse, with both being seen as desirable and deserved consequences of merit accumulated in past lives. At the same time,

however, wealth and sensuality are subject to critique in Buddhist renunciatory discourse, wherein these same sensual pleasures are presented as antithetical to the monastic lifestyle and the ultimate goal of enlightenment. While there is a general scholarly consensus that urbanization and cultural changes taking place in the last centuries BCE in India served as an important backdrop for the rise and development of Buddhism, Fiorucci's thorough examination of the widespread cultural significance assumed by *kāma* during this period sheds new light on one such important cultural change. This allows him to identify, describe, and discuss in a nuanced and detailed fashion, historically and culturally situated conceptions of *kāma*, for which Pali Buddhist texts make up a significant source.

The main contribution of this book is, however, the author's careful and detailed analysis of the monastic discipline of the Pali *Vinaya* in Part 3. Analyzing legislation on such a wide variety of topics as sexuality, bathing, bodily care, textiles and dress, ornaments and adornment, furniture and furnishings, and music and dance, Fiorucci shows that Buddhist monastic discipline, while, on the one hand, expressed in legal terms and set forth within a legalistic framework, also follows an ethical logic that conforms to key elements of Buddhist doctrine regarding the renunciation of *kāma* as expressed in the Pali *sutta*s. Importantly, in this way he also challenges the view that Buddhist monastic discipline has little to do with spiritual practice or ethics but is primarily concerned with the *saṅgha*'s corporate image, seeking to avoid lay criticism by having monks and nuns behave in ways that meet lay expectations of renouncers, thereby attracting their support and donations. Without dismissing the importance of upholding the *saṅgha*'s corporate image or lay expectations for the monastic legal experts, he convincingly argues that Buddhist monastic discipline is also intimately linked to Buddhist doctrine and ethics.

Lastly, for anyone interested in topics such as ancient Indian material culture, the realia of Buddhist monastic life, and the complexities and paradoxes of Buddhist monastic views of the body, this book's careful analysis of the Pali *Vinaya*'s rules regarding, among other things, rugs, footwear, cosmetics, haircare, dyeing robes, musicality, and much more, informed by both secondary literature and non-Pali primary sources, Buddhist and otherwise, is a treasure trove of information.

Revised with the help of valuable insights and comments generously offered by, first and foremost, Petra Kieffer-Pülz and Rupert Gethin, but also other scholars since being defended as a PhD thesis with the same title at Uppsala University in 2023, *Guilty Pleasures: Kāma in Ancient India and the Pali Vinaya*, stands as an impressive and important contribution to the larger fields of Indology and Buddhist studies, as well as *vinaya* studies more specifically.

Uppsala, August 2026 Jens Wilhelm Borgland

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This book represents a revised version of my doctoral dissertation of the same title researched and written while I was a PhD student at the Department of Theology at Uppsala University, Sweden and defended in November of 2023. Many individuals and institutions were instrumental in affording me the intellectual and personal support for bringing this project to fruition. My deepest debt of gratitude I reserve for my former advisor Jens Wilhelm Borgland. Jens witnessed the slow maturation of this project from its embryonic form until its conclusion. Jens has been a consistent source of support, offering intellectual guidance and encouraging my scholarly pursuits while preventing me from veering too far from my path of inquiry. He opened my eyes to the sheer breadth and depth of the Buddhist monastic tradition, and his scholarly acumen has been a constant source of inspiration and motivation. I could not have asked for a better advisor.

The Department of Theology at Uppsala University offered a stimulating and diverse intellectual environment, enabling exchange and dialogue between a wide range of disciplines. Especially beneficial to the development of this project were the Higher Seminars in the History of Religions and World Christianity where many drafts of chapters were presented, discussed, and critiqued among fellow colleagues. Special thanks go to Kajsa Ahlstrand who faithfully led the seminar for years, Nisse Billing, Lisa Bukhave Jensen, Emma Sundström, Per-Johan Norelius, Pär Eliasson, Tomas Poletti, Oulia Makkonen, Sofia Oreland, Ernils Larsson, and Anita Yadala Suneson. Per-Johan's and Lisa's expertise on Vedic India have been especially helpful to parts of this study. I am also indebted to Kajsa for assisting in arranging my visit to the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka in the spring of 2020 which I undertook with financial assistance from Margit and Rune Johansson's scholarship fund. Several chapters of this book were researched and written during my visit there.

I also express my deep appreciation for the guidance and advice of my co-advisor Oliver Freiberger. Many of the chapters of this present work have greatly benefited from his keen and critical eye and his thoughtful suggestions. Thanks to a generous stipend from the Nathan and Anna Söderblom scholarship fund I was also afforded the opportunity in March of 2022 to visit Oliver at the Department of Asian Studies, University of Texas, Austin where I discussed my ongoing

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Lastly, I extend a debt of gratitude to my father Tony, sister Clare, my brother Cody and to Åsa for their encouragement and emotional support during these past years.

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Introduction

> I do not know how I can conceive the good, if I withdraw the pleasures of taste, withdraw the pleasures of love, withdraw the pleasures of hearing, and withdraw the pleasurable emotions caused by the sight of a beautiful form.[1]
>
> *Epicurus, Fragment 10, On the Goal of Life*
> Translation Bailey 1926: 123

> Whose bow is a garland, whose strings are buzzing bees,
> whose mark is women, and who shoots the heart
> with arrows five, the qualities of sense;
> may he, who bodiless has yet the strength
> to conquer all the world, may *Kāma*,
> who lives in women's glances, lead you to your loves.[2]
>
> *Subhāṣitaratnakośa v. 331.*
> Translation based on Ingalls 1965: 151

Kāma holds a prominent position in Indian thought, finding expression in epochs spanning from the ancient to the modern, referencing the experiential domain of desire, passion, and the variegated pleasures of sense – in a word, *sensuality*.[3] In

---

1 Epicurus, Fragment 10: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔγωγε ἔχω τί νοήσω τἀγαθὸν ἀφαιρῶν μὲν τὰς διὰ χυλῶν ἡδονὰς τῆς τε ἀφροδισίων καὶ τῆς ἀπολαύσεως τῆς ἀκοῆς καὶ τῆς ἐκ τοῦ θεωρεῖν τὰς τοῦ προσώπου καλὰς μορφάς.

2 *Subhāṣitaratnakośa* 14.9 (v. 331):
dhanur mālā maurvī kvaṇad-alikulaṃ lakṣyam abalāmano-bhedyaṃ śabda-prabhṛta-ya ime pañca-viśikhāḥ
iyāṃ jetuṃ yasya tribhuvanam adehasya vibhavaḥ sa vaḥ kāmaḥ kāmān diśatu dayitā-pāṅga-vasatiḥ.

3 In citations, words within parentheses (…) indicate Indian words if italicized, or words assumed by the original context. Words in […] indicate my own additions to citations and translations. I use double quotes ("…") for citations from secondary and primary sources and single quotes ('…') for glossing single terms, concepts, and phrases.

a positive sense, *kāma* connotes all the delightful forms of bliss that phenomenal existence has to offer. Negatively construed, however, it constitutes a veritable moral danger, a persistent lure hindering the achievement of truly sublime spiritual beatitude. Succumbing to the passions and to the allures of sensual gratification is said to have dissolved empires, destroyed kings, and ended the careers of innumerable ascetics throughout the ages. This ambivalence inherent to Indian conceptualizations of *kāma*, and its seeming ability to speak to the human predicament, has lent it a central place in Indian intellectual history. And these contending valences of *kāma* – the push and pull of desire and the freedom from it – also constitute a core problematic in early Buddhism.

Anyone at all familiar with the hagiographical narrative relating the spiritual quest of the young nobleman Siddhattha Gotama, destined to become the Buddha, will recognize the recurrent literary trope depicting his luxurious upbringing and its many sensual delights. Purportedly born into the ruling class (*khattiya*) in the Sakyan oligarchy of northern India, the young Gotama is depicted as acculturated into a social milieu utterly saturated with the variegated pleasures of sense. This milieu is depicted as decidedly urban, heavily stratified and, as far as its material culture, is portrayed as permeated with the exceptional aesthetic refinement of aristocratic culture. Multiple palatial abodes, fine clothing, golden ornaments, aromatic perfumes, and the continuous company of beautiful women – the young Gotama is said to have been furnished with all the sensual delights his culture had to offer and which, one would assume, should satisfy his every desire.[4]

Gotama nevertheless renounces his life of wealth and sensual enjoyment in order to attain to another goal – freedom from suffering (*dukkha*) and rebirth (*saṃsāra*). In the pursuit of his spiritual quest, Gotama first becomes a disciple under two teachers.[5] But dissatisfied with their teachings he abandons them. Later, Gotama attaches himself to a small group of ascetics practicing a harsh regimen of physical austerities in the pursuit of liberative knowledge. But these austerities only bring him to the brink of death without offering any spiritual relief. It is only upon realizing the futility of such austere asceticism, we are told, that the young Gotama realizes a moderate mode of practice, encapsulated in the notion of the

4 Particularly the *Māgandhiya*, *Mahāsaccaka*, *Mahāsīhanāda*, *Ariyapariyesana*, *Acchariyabbhūta* and *Bhayabherava Suttas* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* contain purported biographical elements of the Buddha's life before his awakening. The *Mahākhandhaka*, or first book of the *Mahāvagga* of the Pali *Vinaya*, also reposits details purported to occur immediately after the Buddha's awakening. With Sanskrit texts such as Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* and the Mahāsaṅghika-Lokottaravādin *Mahāvastu* one encounters more linearly structured narrations of the Buddha's purported biography.

5 These are identified as Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta in the *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta* (M I 163.27–167.8).

'middle way' (*majjhimā paṭipadā*).[6] Through this newly discovered path of action, which discursively positions itself between indulgence in the pleasures of sense (*kāma*) and dedication to harsh austerities – a course of action which were to set the ideological tenor for the formation of early Buddhist monasticism – Gotama finally achieves the tranquility of body and mind that allows him to attain *bodhi*, the liberating knowledge of salvation, through which he becomes the Awakened One, the Buddha.[7]

Following his awakening, the Buddha is said to have delivered his first sermon, *The Turning of the Wheel of the Teaching*, which was to become programmatic and paradigmatic in articulating the normative soteriological path of the early Buddhist monastic tradition. The Buddha expounds to his former ascetic companions this novel moderate course of action through which one may attain to liberating knowledge and complete awakening. As reposited in the opening chapter of the *Mahāvagga* in the Pali *Vinaya*, it relates:

> Monks, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth into homelessness. What two? That which pursues the pleasure and contentment (*kāmasukhallikānuyogo*) among sense pleasures (*kāmesu*) which is low, uncivilized, vulgar, ignoble, and unbeneficial, and that which pursues self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial. Avoiding both these extremes, the middle way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata, which is conducive to vision and conducive to knowledge, and which leads to tranquility, higher knowledge, awakening, and *nibbāna*.[8]

Despite any historical merit, or lack thereof, with regard to this hagiographical tale, its rhetorical and emotive force rests on a fundamental opposition – a dialectic pertaining between sensual pleasure (*kāma*) and bodily austerities – and its ideological synthesis in the notion of the middle way.[9] It assumes not only an

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6 E.g. S IV 330.28–331.9; Vin I 10.10–17.

7 This narrative is partially retold in the *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta* (M I 163.9–173.20) and the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta* (M I 237.6–251.10).

8 Vin I 10.10–17: *atha kho bhagavā pañcavaggiye bhikkhū āmantesi. dve 'me bhikkhave antā pabbajitena na sevitabbā. katame dve. yo cāyaṃ kāmesu kāmasukhallikānuyogo hīno gammo pothujjaniko anariyo anatthasaṃhito, yo cāyaṃ attakilamathānuyogo dukkho anariyo anatthasaṃhito, ete kho bhikkhave ubho ante anupagamma majjhimā paṭipadā tathāgatena abhisambuddhā cakkhukaraṇī ñāṇakaraṇī upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati.* For *sukhallikā* as 'happiness,' see Edgerton 1953: 596. The passage is also extant at S V 420.25–421.9 and partially extant at S IV 330.28–331.2.

9 There has been recurrent debate considering whether or not the Buddha was in fact a historical figure; see e.g. Wynne 2019; Drewes 2017. For a response to Drewes, see von Hinüber 2019; 2023; for a rebuttal of criticisms, see Drewes 2023. While Drewes proposes that we have no proof that the Buddha was a historical figure, I find it diffi-

extant notion of asceticism but, also, a recognizable domain of cultural practice associated with the gratification of the senses, that is, *kāma* – the central subject of this study.

The notion of the middle way was to become a leitmotif and a structuring principle in the development of the Buddhist *saṅgha* – the self-governing polity of nuns and monks tasked with perpetuating the teachings (*dhamma*) and implementing the monastic discipline (*vinaya*) outlined by the tradition's Teacher. By adhering to the monastic training as set forth by the Buddha, which eschews both sensual gratification and extreme asceticism, monastics are to tread the moderate path expounded by their foundational master.[10] As Oliver Freiberger has insightfully elucidated, in propagating a supposed middle ground between two morally detrimental extremes, the rhetoric of the middle way discursively marginalizes austere forms of asceticism in the monastic Order.[11] At the same time, however, the rhetoric of moderation also maligns modes of practice and bodily comportment associated with sensuality or *kāma*. As Freiberger remarks, the characterization of *kāma* as an extreme to be avoided may have had as its intended audience not only those outside the monastic fold but those within the *saṅgha*.[12] Indeed, the innumerable rulings introduced by the monastic legislators with the purported aim of preventing the intrusion into the Order of varieties of conduct viewed as sensuous in nature would point in just such a direction. The present study is ulti-

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cult to deem plausible the notion that the large body of teachings ascribed to him and the instantiation of a monastic Order could have come into existence without such a historical figure. The import of the present study, meanwhile, is in no wise preoccupied with or affected by the historical or otherwise existence of the Buddha, as it only concerns itself with the contents and perspectives of the literature as it has been preserved.

10 The centrality of the Buddha's hagiography continues to emit emotional force in modern Buddhist countries. In Burma, around the age of puberty, male youths undergo an elaborate *rite de passage* in which they are temporally initiated as novices (*sāmaṇera*) into the Buddhist monastic Order, in a puberty rite called *shin-byu*. One day prior to the initiation a mock palace in which the ceremony will be enacted is constructed, with a musical orchestra performing throughout the day. The following day, the male youth is dressed in court regalia and regarded as a 'prince.' He is led as part of a procession to the local monastery where he receives his monastic requisites. Again led in a procession, with full orchestra blazing, he returns to the mock palace. There in an atmosphere of revelry people engage in dance, with orchestra in fervent accompaniment. When the monks assisting in the ceremony arrive, the young prince is led out of the palace, his head and eyebrows shaven, he dons the yellow robes, and returns back to the palace – "having left a prince, he returns a mendicant" (Spiro 1982: 238–246).

11 Freiberger 2006.

12 Freiberger 2006: 251.

mately tasked with uncovering how the notion of *kāma* came to shape the contours of monastic law as reflected in the Pali *Vinaya*.

A proper contextualization both of asceticism and sensuality in ancient Indian society is imperative in order for historians to adequately understand the early Buddhist tradition and the dynamics of its ideology.[13] Numerous insightful studies have significantly expanded our understanding of the former. These have investigated the broader ascetic milieu from which the early Buddhist tradition arose and from which it differentiated itself;[14] have highlighted the ways through which ascetic practices are marginalized within the normative structure of Buddhist monasticism;[15] how such practices have nonetheless remained a persistent fixture within the monastic milieu;[16] and how they are throughout history periodically reimbued with powerful charismatic force.[17] Although a plethora of studies have also through various hermeneutical lenses investigated the complicated relationship between the Buddhist tradition and sexuality,[18] none to date have garnered systematic attention to the much broader obverse to asceticism – the notion of sensuality, or *kāma*, in ancient India and its relation to early Buddhist thought and monasticism. It is such a concern which this study will address by posing the following questions:

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13 My use of the term 'ideology' is not used pejoratively or depreciatively; neither do I employ the term in the limited sense of 'political ideology' nor in the Marxist sense of ideological 'superstructure' or 'false consciousness' masking empirical material conditions. I also do not use the term as entirely delimited to the realm of ideas and discourse. While ideology is expressed discursively through language and moral maxims, I understand it as also intending the embodied mental and corporeal dispositions that moral subjects carry within them. As Thomas Hansen (1999: 61) remarks, "Ideology is most effective when inscribed in unconscious predispositions, in sayings, bon mots, dress, and cultural codes, in short doxa lived by human beings in accordance with their habitus, the durably embodied dispositions of human beings that govern their most fundamental sense of appropriateness." Hansen refers here to Pierre Bourdieu's (1977: 93–94) notion of *bodily hexis*: "Bodily hexis is political mythology embodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking." Ideologies are at once ways of *viewing* and of *being in* the world. In this sense, there is no position outside of ideology. Cf. Ali 2008: 70; Žižek 1999: 89–92; Handy 2016: 134, n. 388.

14 Wiltshire 1990.

15 Freiberger 2006; Schopen 2006a.

16 Witkowski 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2025.

17 Carrithers 1983; Tambiah 1984; Ray 1994.

18 Cabezón 1992; Perera 1993; Wilson 1996; Powers 2009; Cabezón 2017; Burford 1991; Faure 1998; Clarke 2009; Langenberg 2017, 2019.

- How was *kāma* understood in ancient India during the period of collation of the canonical Pali literature in the last centuries BCE?
- What kinds of concrete material practices are associated with *kāma*? What is their place within the broader social and cultural environment?
- What is the relation of *kāma* to normative Buddhist doctrine?
- And, above all, how does this normativity find reflection in the program of monastic law as reposited in the Pali *Vinaya*?

1.1. The elusive middle ground

The oppositional dialectic between renunciation and *kāma* is a trope that recurrently surfaces in Indian thought, from ancient times to the modern day. Most renunciant traditions stemming from the Indian cultural sphere grapple, in one way or another, with this perennial problematic, and the Buddhist tradition is but one example.[19] Indeed, a wealth of textual material from various epochs in Indian history indicate that the protagonists of the Buddhist monastic tradition have been recurrently accused of succumbing to the forces of the passions and reverting to lives of sensual excess.[20] The Pali *Vinaya*, for example, is replete with instances in which people reproach Buddhist monks and nuns for partaking of the same kinds of luxuries enjoyed by non-monastics – they are critiqued for behaving like "householders who enjoy sensual pleasures" (m. *gihī kāmabhogino*, f. *gihino kāmabhoginiyo*).[21] But yet more visceral critique comes from competing groups operating within the same greater ascetic milieu as early Buddhist monastics. In the

19 The figure of Śiva is a prime exemplar of this tenacious dichotomy. As the excellent study of Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Śiva the Erotic Ascetic* (1981), highlights, Śiva embodies in himself, at one and the same time, these two seemingly diametrically opposed realms of human experience that continuously occupied Indic intellectuals and moral traditions. Even the Vietnamese monk, Thích Nhất Hạnh's own modernized monastic code is committed to the "dynamic balance we call the Middle Way" (Borgland 2017: 270).

20 While already apparent during the period of collation of the Pali canon, the trope of Buddhist monks prone to sensuality recurs in Indic literature for centuries to come, such as Jayanta Bhaṭṭha's ninth century play, *Āgamaḍambara*, and Kṛṣṇamiśra's tenth-century drama *Prabhodhacandrodaya*; see the "Final Remarks" in this study.

21 In the PTS edition of the *Vinayapiṭaka*, the phrase is written as a compound: *gihikāmabhogino* (e.g. Vin I 306.29) or *gihikāmabhoginiyo* (e.g. Vin IV 349.7). In this case, *gihikāmabhogin* or *gihikāmabhoginī* could potentially be translated as "enjoying the sensual pleasures *of* householders." However, in the *Suttapiṭaka* one finds the phrase written separately as *gihĭ kāmabhogĭ, gihī kāmabhogino/gihiniyo kāmabhoginiyo* (e.g. A II 69.9; D III 124.6–14; M I 492.24–35; Mil 350.24–25). The same separation is consistently found in the Burmese *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka* edition, including in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. Following the latter rendering, the relevant phrase would be "householders who enjoy sensual

Pāsādika Sutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, one encounters competing renunciant groups (*titthiya*) ridiculing their Buddhist counterparts, stating "those ascetics, sons of the Sakyan, lead a life devoted to enjoyment."[22] In one episode from the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* the Buddha himself is disparaged by a wandering ascetic; he is called a "little shaven-headed householder" (*muṇḍagahapatika*),[23] attesting to the ambiguous position of him and his followers in the eyes of some ascetic contemporaries. These derisions, preserved in the early Pali sources, would appear to give voice to the marginal position of Buddhist monastics within the greater ascetic milieu – some kind of hybrid, not fully conformant to standards of renunciatory rigor. On the other hand, it seems such accusations of easy living and luxury were not entirely detrimental but could also make for good press. In the *Mahāvagga*, for example, when the affluent parents of a certain young man of delicate constitution, Upāli, consider what vocation he should pursue so as to "live at ease and not be in want,"[24] they eschew the by-all-standards relatively cushy occupations of scribe, accountant, and money-lender for a livelihood more comfortable yet: "These ascetics, sons of the Sakyans," they deliberate, "are pleasant in habit, pleasant in conduct; having eaten good meals, they lie down on beds sheltered from the wind. What if Upāli were to go forth among them? Thus would Upāli after our demise live pleasantly and without want."[25]

The intermediate position of Buddhist monastics functioned as a double-edged sword: on the one hand it led to substantial criticism and accusations from some householders and contemporaneous renunciatory groups, on the other it distinguished Buddhist monastics as more refined than their ascetic contemporaries.[26] But due to the criticism that inordinate material refinement could provoke, it should come as no surprise that the corpus of monastic law as found in the Pali *Vinaya* contains innumerable legal provisions whose apparent aim is keeping

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pleasure" (*gihī kāmabhogino*, *gihiniyo/gihinī kāmabhoginiyo*), and I will follow this interpretation throughout the present study.

22 D III 130.22–24. *… sukhallikānuyogam anuyuttā samaṇā sakyaputtiyā viharantīti …* For a full translation of the episode, see Walshe 1995: 434.

23 Vin IV 91.21 (BD II 348).

24 Vin I 77.11–14: *kena nu kho upāyena Upāli amhākaṃ accayena sukhañ ca jīveyya na ca kilameyyā 'ti.*

25 Vin I 77.26–30: *ime kho samaṇā Sakyaputtiyā sukhasīlā sukhasamācārā subhojanāni bhuñjitvā nivātesu sayanesu sayanti. sace kho Upāli samaṇesu Sakyaputtiyesu pabbajeyya, evaṃ kho Upāli amhākaṃ accayena sukhañ ca jīveyya na ca kilameyyā 'ti.* See also Vin I 86.10–21. Cf. Brekke 1997: 9–10. Brekke also lists similar examples from the canonical and commentarial literature. He typifies such cases as "extrinsically" motivated conversions to the *saṅgha*.

26 For this dynamic, see Powers 2009: 24–66, 112–140.

displays of sensuality outside the monastic milieu, to keep Buddhist monastics from behaving like those who enjoy sensual pleasures (*kāmabhogin*).[27]

As will be detailed, these legal interventions penetrate to the very fiber of monastic life, not only regulating the vast domain of sexuality but also more quotidian matters such as licit and illicit varieties of dress, coiffure, bathing, odorants, cosmetics, bodily decorations, tactile interactions, furniture, and so on – the list is extensive. And although one cannot assume that the corpus of rulings constituting the Pali *Vinaya* was ever followed to the letter by any given monastic – indeed the rulings anticipate their transgression – or even known in its entirety by more than a handful of legal specialists (*vinayadhara*), this corpus nonetheless attests to the repeated attempts of the monastic legislators to partition the lives of monastics from the world of *kāma*.[28] The repeated criticisms of householders, the denigrations of competing renunciatory groups, all attest to the need for a legislative apparatus tasked with protecting the public image of the *saṅgha*. After all, the ideological edifice of the Buddhist vocation is founded upon the renunciation of sensuality and sensual gratification as reflected in the extolled acts of the tradition's Teacher. *Kāma* constitutes a problem for Buddhist ideology, and consequently for the Order too. And examination of the Pali *Vinaya* reveals that the monastic legislators were deeply concerned with upholding the reputation of the Order and the ethos of the renunciatory endeavor.[29]

1.2. Buddhism and urbanism

Kāma as a central problematic in Buddhist monasticism, I will argue, cannot be adequately understood apart from the processes of urbanization and consequent social stratification that transformed the cultural and material landscape of northern India in the last centuries BCE. As will be demonstrated, *kāma* in Pali literature is deeply intertwined with contemporaneous notions of luxury, leisure, material refinement, and perceptions of societal difference. To lead a sensuous life is ultimately an exercise in affluence and material comfort – with the wealthy urbanized classes, especially royalty, constituting its apotheosis.

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27 The content and context of such accusations will be examined in Part 3 of this study. The characterization of others as '*kāmabhogin*' in the surrounding social field will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

28 My use of the phrase 'world of kāma' is inspired by Daud Ali's (2011a) notion of 'kāma world.'

29 On my approach to the Pali *Vinaya* and its social function, see Chapter 3.3.

The close connection between early Buddhism[30] and the rise of urbanism has been noted by many scholars. One of the earlier scholars to remark on this relationship is Max Weber. "Buddhism," writes Weber, "presents itself as a product of the time of urban development of urban kingship and the city nobles."[31] Similarly, Balkrishna Govind Gokhale writes that "early Buddhism rode to popular acceptance on the crest of a significant urban revolution," drawing its early support from the urbanized classes.[32] Many scholars have proposed that the Buddha's dispensation offered a general ethos for a society that was in the process of undergoing a dramatic sociological shift. In the north of the subcontinent nobles and kings were consolidating political power, the socioeconomic structure of society was becoming radically diversified, and trade networks were undergoing steady expansion. All this precipitated a shift from an erstwhile loose association of small-scale villages into the emergence of large-scale polities with fortified capital cities and trading towns forming the political and economic nuclei.[33] To this end, historian K. K. Kosambi writes that the early Buddhist tradition "was eminently fitted to the needs of the rapidly evolving society".[34] The early Buddhist tradition, Ram Sharan Sharma suggests, provided a universalist ethics which simultaneously appealed to the expansionist aspirations of kings, legitimated the economic interests of the merchant classes, and supplanted the kind of Vedic ritualism whose ideological structure was more suited to the village context.[35]

Others have instead argued that Buddhism was not only congenial to these new social conditions but confrontational. Sociologist Uma Chakravarti draws attention to a simultaneous ideological opposition and economic dependence, stating that "Buddhism had a dialectical relationship" with the emerging economic

30 With 'early Buddhism' I intend the first centuries of the Buddhist tradition in India, the period during which the canonical Pali literature was composed and collated. For a discussion of the dating of the canonical Pali literature, see Chapter 3.5.

31 Weber 1958: 204.

32 Gokhale 1982: 7.

33 For a background of this process, see Thapar 1991. Many have related this period of transition to Karl Jaspers formulation of the 'Axial Age.'

34 Kosambi 1966: 114.

35 Sharma 1983: 121. This is not to say that early Buddhism constituted a 'protest' against Vedic ritualism. Rather, it develops in the changing social environment of northern and northeastern India in which Vedic orthopraxy was neither dominant and to which it was not well suited. Olivelle remarks that the Buddhist (and Jain) usage of such terms as *sāsana*, *dhamma*, *cakkavattin* (or *cakravartin*) and the attribution of royal pedigree to the Buddha is reflective of a purposive legitimatizing strategy, "the new religions [i.e. Buddhism and Jainism] are presented as the ones best suited to the new age of royal power, large states, an affluent mercantile community, and urban centers" (Olivelle 2012: 126–127).

structure and the new society, "demonstrating simultaneously both an opposition to and unity with it."[36] Daud Ali has more pointedly argued that this dialectical interdependence was especially apropos of the relationship between early Buddhist monasticism and early courtly culture.[37] It is in this socially and economically complex urbanized sphere, with multiple strands of contending valences, wherein *kāma* accrues its particular cultural significance. Greg Bailey and Ian Mabbett, however, question such a seemingly concordant dissonance: "How, in detail, could a single protagonist both oppose and unite with socio-economic changes? What, in fact, was this Buddhism?"[38] To solve this dilemma, Greg Bailey and Ian Mabbett provide their own explanation. Put simply, they argue that the Buddhist monk performed the critical function of acting as mediator between the expansive urban sphere and the rural hinterland upon which it continuously encroached.[39]

My intent with this study is not to challenge Bailey and Mabbett's convincing thesis but to provide an additional vantage point from which to view the relationship between Buddhism and the rise of urbanism. It is important to note, as does Jason Neelis, that the growth of the Buddhist tradition was in tandem with, and not *prior to*, the processes of urbanization occurring in northern India. Archaeology witnesses only "incipient urbanism" from around 550 BCE in the northeastern Gangetic plains and "thriving urbanism" only by the third century BCE.[40] The Pali literature developed roughly from the death of the Buddha in circa 400 BCE

36 Chakravarti 1996: 64.

37 Ali 1998: 159. Ali compares the contents of the *Kāmasūtra* with the material found in the Pali *Vinaya*, noting a significant degree of overlap. This, he suggests, indicates that the practices found in the *Kāmasūtra*, and which are therefore associated with *kāma*, were extant and popularized during the period of collation of the Pali texts. His observations will be of critical importance in the current study. Ali views courtly society and Buddhist monasticism as developing in dialectical relationship with each other. While I view this as a very cogent insight, I intend to survey the broader social field of the time, beyond the mere social milieu of the burgeoning aristocratic courts.

38 Bailey & Mabbett 2003: 33.

39 "Buddhism expanded and flourished … because the monk (and perhaps the nun, though there is little evidence for this) was able to function as an instrument of mediation between the forces – political and economic – benefiting from the changes that had taken place prior to, and perhaps during, the life of the Buddha, on the one hand, and those other groups for whom such changes were difficult to digest, on the other hand" (Bailey & Mabbett 2003: 5).

40 Neelis 2011: 74. See also Thapar 2003: 140. Erdosy contends that the urban landscape portrayed in the Pali literature and Sanskrit epics "were inspired by the urban centres of the Maurya and post-Maurya periods whose images were projected into an earlier age" (Erdosy 1985: 84). On the urbanized cultural and economic milieu portrayed in Pali literature, see von Simson 1991: 90–99.

to the end of the last century BCE.[41] Thus while one cannot propose a direct casual relation between urbanism and the rise of Buddhism, what Greg Bailey and Ian Mabbett call "the *post hoc ergo proper hoc* fallacy,"[42] I would nonetheless propose that the notion of *kāma* as it is stands in relation to Buddhist ideology provides succinct expression to this dialectical process of simultaneous opposition and unity.

In the first place, the undergirding logic of a discourse on "the renunciation of sensual pleasures," that is, the rejection of *kāma*, is dependent upon a perceived world of sensuality and refinement against which it stands in opposition. The socioeconomic transformations of the last centuries BCE presented ever-increasing indicators of material prosperity and wealth, as the social distribution of luxury goods and discrepancies in living conditions became indices of class difference. Sensual pleasure in this context of a burgeoning market economy became increasingly viewed as something that could be bought and sold. As implied by a passage from the *Cullavagga*: "To whomever gold and silver are allowable, to him are also allowed the five kinds of sensual pleasure."[43] The notion of "the five kinds of sensual pleasure" (*pañca kāmaguṇa*) refers here to the various objects of sensual gratification apprehended by means of each of the five senses, and is a concept that will reappear throughout this study. In this social environment, the objects of sensual enjoyment are especially represented by luxury goods, resulting in the lifeworlds of the urbanized socioeconomic elite to be portrayed in Pali literature as particularly suffused with the joys of *kāma*.

But if the rhetoric of renunciation seemingly repudiates this world of sensual satisfaction, *kāma* nonetheless still finds accommodation within broader Buddhist ideology. For a lifeworld permeated with the pleasures of sense is nonetheless presented as both desirable and a natural recompense for the performance of previous meritorious actions.[44] This is particularly the case with regard to Buddhist ethical norms, the observance of which is presented as affording individuals a life of sensual gratification in future rebirths. The broader structure of Buddhist ideology is able to accommodate these multiple contending valences of *kāma*. This multivalency infuses the tradition with a creative tension, sustaining multiple modes of ethical cultivation.

R. S. Sharma considers that "the real key to the understanding of the rise of new religious movements lies in certain significant developments in the material life of the people."[45] What the present study attempts to accomplish is to supple-

41 The dating of the Pali literature will be discussed in Chapter 3.6.

42 Bailey & Mabbett 2003: 34.

43 Vin II 297.23–26: *yassa kho gāmaṇī jātarūparajataṃ kappati pañca pi tassa kāmaguṇā kappanti …* The same phrasing is also extant at S IV 326.4–6.

44 This will be discussed in Chapter 6.2.

45 Sharma 1983: 117.



Figure 1: Aniconic depiction of the Great Departure of the Buddha from Kapilavatthu upon his renunciation. Sāñcī, stupa 1, northern gateway, ca. 1st century BCE

ment the important insights of previous scholars by relating *kāma* to the social and material conditions of northern India as reflected in the canonical Pali literature. It is in this urbanized context – offering an ever-increasing array of modes of material consumption and means of satisfying the senses, even as it intensified social hierarchies and aggravated economic disparities – that a discourse on *kāma* finds fertile ground.[46]

46 For my understanding of *kāma* as a 'discourse,' see Chapter 2.3. When I analytically refer to 'a discourse on *kāma*' in this study it should not be conflated with the early Buddhist text called the *Kāmasutta* ('The Discourse on *Kāma*') found in the *Suttanipāta.*

This study seeks to elucidate how *kāma* was conceived in ancient India and how this is reflected in the program of monastic law as reposited in the Pali *Vinaya*. As will be demonstrated, notions of *kāma* had a pivotal impact in shaping the contours of monastic discipline, functioning as a regulating principle in numerous legal domains: sexuality, bathing and bodily care, monastic dress and decoration, furnishings, and the regulation of musicality. Tracing these interlinkages reveals a 'prehistory' of *kāma* prior to its codification in the scholarly Kāmaśāstra tradition inaugurated by the *Kāmasūtra*, albeit refracted through a Buddhist lens. But conceiving *kāma* requires not only taking seriously materiality but the body and the senses. For, ultimately, *kāma* is a discourse on the body, its desires, its pleasures. Chapter 2 therefore delineates how an analytic framework consisting of such themes can be used to recover the significance of *kāma* in ancient India, while Chapter 3 delineates the materials used in this study and how such a framework can be applied to them.

While mostly discussed in relation to treatises such as the *Kāmasūtra*, the notion of *kāma* has deep roots in Indian intellectual and cultural history. Popularly associated with sexuality, *kāma* in fact extends far beyond that to include what may be called 'sensuality' broadly understood. Using the canonical Pali literature as sources and drawing on theories of the senses and aesthetics in anthropology and cultural studies, *Guilty Pleasures* investigates the significance of *kāma* in early Buddhism and its centrality in Buddhist doctrine, ethics, and monastic law.

The last centuries BCE in northern India witnessed major socioeconomic transformations: urbanization, the proliferation of trade, the transition to an early market economy, and increased economic disparities. All of this had a significant impact on patterns of material consumption and transformed how individuals viewed the relation between wealth and pleasure, the senses and their gratification. It is in this period of social upheaval that *kāma* assumes its cultural significance and in which early Buddhism develops.

Early Buddhism places *kāma* front and center in its diagnosis of the human predicament and its normative ethics. While gratification of the senses is considered a natural component of household life and heavenly existence, the monastic vocation is conversely premised on the renunciation of *kāma*. Accordingly, a litany of legal rulings in the Pali *Vinaya* proscribe a wide range of material practices because of their purportedly sensuous nature – seen in domains as diverse as sexuality, bodily care, ornamentation, dress, furnishings, and musicality. By demonstrating the strong connection between monastic law and the central philosophical, ethical, and soteriological concerns found in the *sutta* literature, this study challenges the scholarly tendency to view monastic discipline as largely divorced from Buddhist ethics, while also uncovering a cultural history of ancient India in the process.

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