

Food for Bodhisattvas

*An Intertextual Study of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta
of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra*

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Summary

This thesis is a study of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta (The Chapter on Meat-Eating) of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, one of the key scriptures of the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism which in turn was a key influence on the Chan/Zen schools of China and Japan.

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta argues strongly that a bodhisattva (the ideal Buddhist practitioner for the Mahāyāna) should abstain from eating meat. In doing so it not only argues against but flatly contradicts earlier Buddhist scriptures with which its audience would have been familiar. The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is unusual for a Buddhist text in the strength of the rhetoric it employs against those who hold a different view. This suggests that at the time the text was composed, the debate around whether Buddhists were obliged to abstain from eating meat or not was a heated one. Indeed, the popularity of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra in China and Japan was a major factor in promoting vegetarianism in those societies – particularly amongst Buddhist monks and nuns.

I use philological methods, and an intertextual theoretical approach to analysing this text, drawing on the key concepts of the ideologeme and the horizontal and vertical axes of a text first used by the French theoretician Julia Kristeva, as well as the idea of the death of the author first put forward by Roland Barthes.

I attempt to place the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta in its historical and ideological context by tracing links to not only Buddhist texts, but also texts and ideas from the Jaina and Brahminical traditions. In the main part of the thesis I examine the text thematically, looking at the rules on the permissibility of meat-eating found in early Buddhism, the issue of karma and the karmic effects of meat-eating, loving kindness and compassion as a motivation for abstaining from meat-eating, desire as a motivation for meat-eating, the role of meat-eating and vegetarianism in the competition for support between Buddhism and other Indian religious traditions, the question of purity, and finally examine discussions of vegetarianism in other Mahāyāna texts specifically mentioned in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta.

Forword

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Abbreviations used

AN Aṅguttaranikāya

Dhp Dhammapada

MN Majjhimanikāya

MW Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*

N Nanjio, Bunyiu (ed.) (1923); *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, Bibliotheca Otaniensis Vol.1; Kyoto: Otani University Press. References to the Sanskrit text of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* are given to the page and line of Nanjio's edition, so that N 244:15, for example, refers to page 244, line 15 of the Sanskrit text.

PTSD Pāli Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary

SN Saṃyuttanikāya

Snp Suttanipāta

T Taishō Tripiṭaka

Vin Pāli Vinayapiṭaka

All references to Pāli texts are given to the volume and page number of the Pāli Text Society's edition, followed by the sutta number in brackets where appropriate.

1 – Introduction

This thesis is a study of the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta*, or Chapter on Meat-Eating, of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. This text is the longest and most detailed exposition of a case for vegetarianism found in Buddhist canonical literature, yet it has received little systematic scholarly attention.¹

My initial motivation for choosing to study this text was personal. I am a practising Buddhist, and an ordained member of the Triratna Buddhist Order. I am also active in the animal rights movement in Norway, and am a board member of the organisation NOAH – for Animal Rights. It was the influence of Buddhism in my life that led me to become a vegetarian (and later a vegan) myself as a teenager. I was naturally, therefore, curious to read this most famous and influential traditional Buddhist case for vegetarianism. What I encountered in the text surprised me. Whilst many modern Buddhist teachers argue for vegetarianism as an expression of Buddhist principles, and some have even written books on the subject,² the kind of arguments used bear little resemblance to those found in the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. In reading the case for vegetarianism put forward in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, I felt I was gaining a window on a very different kind of Buddhist perspective on an issue that is close to my heart, and was fascinated by this dissonance.

Moreover, I was also somewhat taken aback by the strong language and polemic style the text employs. Indeed, I have yet to come across a Buddhist text – especially one attributed to the Buddha himself – that is frankly quite so nasty about those who disagree with the perspective it is putting forward. This suggested to me that the debate amongst Buddhists around meat-eating and vegetarianism was quite as fraught and heated in the fifth century as it can be today. The *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* is so clearly part of a wider debate that I wanted to try to uncover the other side of the argument, and identify the kinds of ideas the

¹ The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* has been translated by both Suzuki (1932) and Red Pine (2012). Suzuki (1930) and Harvey (2000) both discuss the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta*, but their discussions only run to a couple of pages and amount to little more than a summary of its contents.

² See for example Kapleau 1981, Bodhipakṣa 1999

Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta argues against and criticises. This led me naturally to conclude that an intertextual approach was the right way to study this text.

In this introduction I will provide some brief background to the textual history of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, and also outline the theories and methods on which this thesis is based. Following that, I will examine the text thematically, looking at the rules on the permissibility of meat-eating found in early Buddhism (Chapter 2), the issue of karma and the karmic effects of meat-eating (Chapter 3), loving kindness and compassion as a motivation for abstaining from meat-eating (Chapter 4), desire as a motivation for meat-eating (Chapter 5), the role of meat-eating and vegetarianism in the competition for support between Buddhism and other Indian religious traditions (Chapter 6), the question of purity (Chapter 7), and finally examine discussions of vegetarianism in other Mahāyāna texts specifically mentioned in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta (Chapter 8).

1.1 The Laṅkāvatārasūtra

The Laṅkāvatārasūtra is one of the great philosophical texts of the Mahāyāna, and presents the views of the Yogācāra school, also known as the Cittamātra (Mind Only) school. These two names indicate two of the main features of this school – that it emphasised the practice of meditation (*yoga*) and that it held to the idealist philosophical view that we can experience nothing other than our own minds.

There are many manuscripts of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra in existence, but no satisfactory critical edition. The Sanskrit text used in this thesis is the edition by Bunyio Nanjio from 1923. Christopher Lindtner describes this edition in the following terms:

[T]his edition is in no way sufficient for critical purposes, not only because it is replete with wrong or uncertain readings, but also because it often differs considerably from the other (earlier) source materials at our disposal, that is, the three Chinese versions (the earliest still available from 443 A.D.) and the two Tibetan versions (one of them made from the earliest available Chinese), not to speak of the variants found in the old Indian commentaries and in numerous quotations in various Indian śāstra-s. [...] One day, when more ancient Sanskrit

*manuscripts from Nepal and Tibet become available, it will be an interesting task to prepare a reliable critical edition of this important sūtra.*³

Although the lack of a satisfactory critical edition of the Laṅkāvatāra mean that there are some details in the text that are somewhat unclear or obscure, Nanjio's edition is certainly sufficient for a study of this nature focusing on rhetoric and intertextuality.

Dating the Laṅkāvatārasūtra is not easy. There are records of a translation of the text into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa in about 420 CE, but this has not survived.⁴ The earliest extant translation into Chinese is that of Guṇabhadra, which is dated 443 CE.⁵ Edward Hamlin concludes that:

*On the whole, we can only assume that the Sanskrit text was composed sometime between the third and fifth centuries AD, judging from its translation history and general style.*⁶

There are a number of features of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra that would support this dating. As Christopher Lindtner points out, the text contains concepts such as *svabhāvas*, *tathāgatagarbha*, *ālayavijñāna* and *vijñāptimātra* that are associated with a later stage in the development of Mahāyāna philosophy than Nāgārjuna.⁷ However, he argues that an early recension of the Laṅkāvatāra was in existence in the second century CE, and that it influenced the work of Nāgārjuna (c.150–250 CE) and Āryadeva (third century CE).⁸ Lindtner's argument is certainly plausible, as we know that Buddhist texts have tended to evolve and be added to over time.

The question arises as to the connection between the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta and the rest of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra. It has little in common with the rest of the sūtra either thematically or linguistically, and the fact that it is the final chapter of the sūtra strengthens the impression of it being 'tacked on'. As Suzuki comments, the chapter has 'no organic

³ Lindtner 1992:244–245

⁴ Hamlin 1983:311

⁵ T.670 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經 *lèngqié ābáduōluó bǎojīng*

⁶ Hamlin 1983:312

⁷ Lindtner 1992:244

⁸ *ibid.*

connection with the text proper'.⁹ Red Pine, who has translated Guṇabhadra's Chinese translation of the Laṅkāvatāra into English disagrees, arguing that:

*This section on cultivating a vegetarian diet follows from the foregoing and is not a haphazard addition. It is important to know how to live in this world of illusions.*¹⁰

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta references (and can thus be assumed to postdate) the Nirvāṇasūtra, which was compiled between 100 CE and 220 CE, and it was translated into Chinese by Guṇabhadra in 443 CE. The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta must therefore have been composed sometime between 100 CE and 443 CE, and most likely in the third or fourth century.

The Sanskrit text of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is fairly similar to Guṇabhadra's translation, but the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is rather longer, suggesting that Guṇabhadra's source text may have been an earlier version of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta than the Sanskrit text we have available to us. In the two later translations of the text into Chinese, by Bodhiruci in 513 CE and Śikṣānanda in 700–704 CE, the Chapter on Meat-Eating is significantly longer than in both the Sanskrit text we have and in Guṇabhadra's translation. The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta thus clearly evolved over time, although whether this evolution took place in India or China or both is hard to say. What we can say, however, is that the Sanskrit text, along with Guṇabhadra's translation, represents the earliest stage of development of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta still extant.

1.2 Intertextuality

The theoretical foundation of this thesis is the concept of intertextuality. Graham Allen defines the term in an eloquent manner when he writes:

Texts, whether they be literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists now call

⁹ Suzuki 1930:368

¹⁰ Red Pine 2012:262

intertextual. The act of reading, theorists claim, plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes the intertext.¹¹

This quote is an excellent summary of the approach I take to reading and interpreting the Māmsabhakṣaṇaparivarta in this thesis.

The term ‘intertextuality’ was coined by the French theorist Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, drawing on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and M. M. Bakhtin. In her essay ‘The Bounded Text’, she discusses texts using the term ‘ideologeme’, which she defines in the following way:

The concept of text as ideologeme determines the very procedure of a semiotics that, by studying the text as intertextuality, considers it as such within (the text of) society and history. The ideologeme of a text is the focus where knowing rationality grasps the transformation of utterances (to which the text is irreducible) into a totality (the text) as well as the insertions of this totality into the historical and social text.¹²

The point she is making here is (to simplify somewhat) is that a text cannot contain meaning abstracted from its social and historical context.

In ‘Word, Dialogue and Novel’, another essay published in the same collection as ‘The Bounded Text’, Kristeva introduces the idea of two axes of communication in a text. The horizontal axis is the communication from author to reader, whereas the vertical axis is the communication between the text and other texts which have preceded it and, in a sense, speak through it.

[H]orizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. In Bakhtin’s work,

¹¹ Allen 2011:1

¹² Kristeva 1980:37

*these two axes, which he calls dialogue and ambivalence are not clearly distinguished. Yet what appears to be a lack of rigour is in fact an insight introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.*¹³

These two foundational concepts within Kristeva's theory of intertextuality guide my analysis of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta in this thesis. In viewing the text as ideologeme, I attempt to place it in its historical and social context, and in taking account of not just the horizontal but the vertical axis of the text, I attempt to sketch at least some of the complex network of relations that exists between the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta and other texts that predate it.

Another central concept in theories of intertextuality is that of the Death of the Author. In his essay of that name, Roland Barthes comments:

*Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. [...] In the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be disentangled, nothing deciphered; the structure can be followed, 'run' (like the thread of a stocking) at every point and at every level, but there is nothing beneath: the space of writing is to be ranged over, not pierced*¹⁴

The idea of the death of the author is both a very modern one, and at the same time very appropriate to the study of ancient texts such as the Laṅkāvatārasūtra. The author or authors of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta are of course anonymous, their words attributed to the Buddha. This can of course be seen as an attempt on their part to co-opt the authority of the Buddha in order to lend weight to their arguments, and most likely quite legitimately so. However, it is also the case that the authors of Buddhist texts had a very different conception of authorship than we do today. They saw themselves as communicating truths that had their origin in the teachings of the Buddha, and that to attribute their text to him was only neutral and fitting.

In any case, Barthes' proposition that a text without an Author (that is to say a supremely authoritative individual consciousness who gives birth to and guides the text) becomes

¹³ *ibid*:66

¹⁴ Barthes 1977:147

more contextual, more clearly a phenomenon that arises out of its social and historical context and the texts that preceded it, that it is to be ‘disentangled’ rather than ‘deciphered’ will guide and inform my approach to the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta.

1.3 Philological Method

As this thesis is, of course, based on philological methods and interpretation, the question of the reliability of the texts referred to must be addressed. In analysing the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta intertextually we are tracing connections between the text and other texts which predate it. This naturally involves us looking primarily to the Pāli Tipiṭaka. There has been a certain amount of scholarly debate in recent years as to the extent to which the image of early Buddhism presented in the Pāli Tipiṭaka can be relied upon as historically accurate. In particular, Gregory Schopen’s groundbreaking work has shown how archeological and epigraphical evidence can often present a picture that contradicts the one found in the Pāli Tipiṭaka.¹⁵

In his 2009 book ‘What the Buddha Taught’, Richard Gombrich argues strongly – and in my view convincingly – that the Pāli Tipiṭaka does indeed represent the best evidence available to us for Buddhism’s early history in an Indian language. He comments:

It is as easy as falling off a log to tell students that ancient texts are untrustworthy and perhaps even to poke fun at a professor who joins pious believers in considering that the ancient texts may be telling the truth about certain historical matters. But this is not worthy of serious scholarship. [...] I know that among scholars of Buddhism I have sometimes been labelled an extreme/naïve/eccentric conservative, because – it is alleged – I accept what the texts say. Let me make clear once and for all that that is not my position. My position is that I accept what the texts say as an initial working hypothesis, and I am as interested as anyone in finding out where the tradition cannot be correct and why.¹⁶

¹⁵ Schopen 1997

¹⁶ Gombrich 2009:95–97

A different version of the early Buddhist canon has of course been preserved in Chinese, and in recent years scholars such as Bhikkhu Anālayo have given a great deal of focus to comparative study of the Pāli and Chinese versions of the canon.

In Gombrich's view, the comparative work that has been done so far only serves to reinforce the case for the reliability of the Pāli Tipiṭaka as evidence of early Buddhism:

True, literally thousands of differences between versions come to light. But an overwhelming majority of these differences, so far at least, have been rather trivial. Texts are differently arranged, both with regard to each other and internally. The locations at which the Buddha is said to have delivered specific sermons are often very different. But I have yet to see another version of a Pali text which makes me interpret it differently.¹⁷

Whilst I of course do not dispute the importance of Chinese and Tibetan sources in the study of Buddhist textual and intellectual history, because this is a thesis in Sanskrit, my focus is necessarily on texts in Indian languages, and Chinese and Tibetan sources are cited only to a limited degree.

It is important that I be clear as to what I am claiming to do in this thesis, and what I am not claiming to do. I am not claiming to use either the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, the Pāli Tipiṭaka, or any other textual sources as evidence for the practice of vegetarianism in India. My aim is to identify links between the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta and other texts in order to demonstrate the idea that reading it intertextually will allow us to understand it in a much fuller way. In tracing these links and references, however, I am not claiming that the authors of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta had access to the particular text from, for example, the Pāli Tipiṭaka which I quote. Practically all Buddhist texts have most likely evolved and changed over time, and many have of course been lost. My aim is not to prove that the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is referencing the specific versions of other texts that we have access to today. The kind of intertextuality I aim to show is something rather more diffuse – that the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta draws on and includes a whole thought-world (to use Bhikkhu Anālayo's phrase) that the Pāli Tipiṭaka and the other texts referred to embody to an extent that is sufficient to make such an analysis meaningful and useful.

¹⁷ *ibid*:98

As discussed above, Nanjio's edition of the text, whilst not perfect, is adequate for the purposes for which I use it here. Whilst Lindtner is critical of Nanjio's edition despite declaring it sufficient for his purposes, his criticism of Suzuki's translation¹⁸ is rather more brutal:

*[Suzuki's translation] often repeats Nanjio's mistakes and adds many new ones, and is thus almost without any philological value at all.*¹⁹

Whilst the language of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is significantly more straightforward than that of most of the rest of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, Suzuki's translation of the text is, in my view, muddled and inaccurate in enough places that a new translation was warranted. The following extract will serve as an example. The Sanskrit text is immediately followed by my translation, and then by Suzuki's.

*evaṃ tāvan mahāmate teṣu teṣu jātiparivarteṣu sarvasattvāḥ
svajanabandhubhāvasaṃjñā sarvasattvaikaputrakasaṃjñābhāvanārthaṃ
māṃsaṃ sarvam abhakṣyam kṛpātmano bodhisattvasyābhakṣyaṃ māṃsam*

*Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for any living beings anywhere in the cycle of rebirths who have any notion of family relationships to eat any kind of meat. This is so that they might cultivate a perception of all living beings as being like their only child.*²⁰

*Thus, Mahāmati, wherever there is the evolution of living beings, let people cherish the thought of kinship with them, and thinking that all beings are [to be loved as if they were] an only child, let them refrain from eating meat.*²¹

Firstly, Suzuki's translation of the term *jātiparivarta* as 'evolution of living beings' makes no sense, and renders the passage needlessly obscure. Secondly, his translation of *saṃjñā* as 'thinking' is too weak, given the message of the section as a whole. Thirdly, he appears to omit *artham* from his translation, which changes the meaning of the passage.

¹⁸ Suzuki 1932

¹⁹ Lindtner 1992:244–245

²⁰ N 246:1–4

²¹ Suzuki 1932:212

2 – The Permissibility of Meat-Eating in Early Buddhism

Any Buddhist author wishing to argue a case for vegetarianism will have to deal with some formidable obstacles. Perhaps the most daunting will be the fact that early Buddhist texts such as those found in the Pāli Tipiṭaka explicitly permit the consumption of meat providing certain conditions are met. This chapter will examine what those conditions were, and look at the rhetorical strategies the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta employs to meet this challenge.

2.1 The Rule of Threefold Purity

The rule of threefold purity (*tikoṭīparisuddha*) is referenced in a number of places in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, but the most important occurrence, which gives the circumstances in which the rule was supposedly laid down, is found in the Khandhaka of the Vinayapiṭaka at the conclusion of the story of General Sīha.²² The General, originally a Jaina devotee, goes to speak to the Buddha and is converted. He wishes to invite the Buddha to eat at his home, and sends someone out to buy meat for the meal. The General's former co-religionists use this as a pretext to attack the Buddha, saying:

*ajja sīhena senāpatinā thūlaṃ pasuṃ vadhitvā samaṇassa gotamassa bhattaṃ
kataṃ, taṃ samaṇo gotamo jānaṃ uddissakataṃ maṃsaṃ paribhuñjati
paṭiccakamma*²³

*Today a fat beast has been killed by General Sīha in order to feed the
renunciant Gotama. The renunciant Gotama enjoys this meat knowing that it
was killed specifically for him, that this action was performed for his sake.*²⁴

The Buddha responds that this is not the case, and that the Jainas are being untruthful in order to discredit him, going so far as to comment:

²² Vin i 233–238 The same story is found at AN iv 179 (8.12), although without the concluding exposition of the *tikoṭīparisuddha* rule.

²³ Vin i 233ff.

²⁴ This, and all translations from Indian languages in this thesis, are my own unless otherwise stated.

na ca mayam jīvitahetupi sañcicca pāṇam jīvitā voropeyyāma²⁵

I would not intentionally deprive a living being of its life even to sustain my own life.

After the meal is concluded, the Buddha clarifies the following rule for the monks:

na, bhikkhave, jā nam uddissakatam maṃsam paribhuñjitabbaṃ. yo paribhuñjeyya āpatti dukkaṭassa. anujānāmi, bhikkhave, tikoṭiparisuddham macchamaṃsam – adiṭṭham assutam aparisaṅkita²⁶

Monks, you should not enjoy meat which has been killed specifically for you. Anyone who does so commits a dukkaṭa offence. Monks, I approve of fish and meat which is pure in three ways – not seen, not heard, and not suspected.

The language of the final clause is somewhat abbreviated, but what is meant is that meat and fish is pure if the monk or nun who eats it has neither seen nor heard, and does not suspect that the meat or fish in question had been killed specifically for him or her (*uddissakatam*).

The *tikoṭiparisuddha* rule was clearly so well-known and widely practiced that it was not possible for the authors of the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* to simply ignore or sidestep it. If they were to have any chance of making headway with their pro-vegetarian views, they were going to have to tackle it head-on, and in bold terms. Indeed, towards the end of his opening address to the Buddha where he asks him to address the topic, Mahāmati comments:

tava śāsane māṃsam svayaṃ ca bhakṣante bhakṣyamāṇam ca na nivāryate²⁷

Yet in your teaching you yourself eat meat, and do not prohibit meat-eating.

The *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* employs a number of strategies to undermine and refute this well-known rule. The first of these strategies is the unusual – indeed extraordinary in a Mahāyāna text – expedient of simply denying the authenticity of the existing tradition, claiming that the Buddha never laid down such a rule. As Peter Harvey comments:

²⁵ Vin i 233ff.

²⁶ Vin i 233ff.

²⁷ N 244:15–245:1

[T]he Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra ... has a series of arguments against meat-eating, and has the Buddha denying the scriptural idea of it being 'blameless' to eat meat that is 'pure in three respects'. Such a direct contradiction of an earlier scriptural idea is unusual in Mahāyāna texts; non-acceptable ideas are generally subverted, reinterpreted, or seen purely as a 'skillful means'. (Harvey 2000:163)

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta directly references and refutes the idea of threefold purity in several places, notably in the following two verses which come towards the end of the text:

*trikoṭīśuddhamāṃsaṃ vai akalpitam ayācitam |
acoditaṃ ca naivāsti tasmān māṃsaṃ na bhakṣayet || 8.12 ||²⁸*

12. 'Meat which is pure in three respects – not prepared, not requested, not invited – does not exist. Therefore, meat should not be eaten.'

*dṛṣṭaśrutaviśaṅkābhiḥ sarvamāṃsaṃ vivarjayet |
tārkikā nāvabudhyante kravyādakulasambhavāḥ || 8.19 ||²⁹*

19. 'Because one sees, hears, and suspects, one should abstain from all kinds of meat.'

Sophists born into carnivorous families do not realise this.

Verse 12 references the idea of threefold purity (*trikoṭīśuddha*) directly, using almost the same term (*trikoṭīśuddha*). Interestingly, however, the three ways in which meat can be said to be pure are given as *akalpitam*, *ayācitam*, and *acoditaṃ* – 'not prepared, not requested, not invited'. These terms are not equivalent to the Pāli *adiṭṭhaṃ*, *assutaṃ*, *aparisaṅkita* – 'not seen, not heard, not suspected'. In verse 19, however, we do find the Sanskrit equivalents, or near-equivalents, of these three terms used (*dṛṣṭa-śruta-viśaṅkā*) but without mention of the idea of threefold purity.

Indeed, elsewhere the text rejects yet another set of three conditions as providing legitimate circumstances in which meat can be consumed:

²⁸ N 257:12–13

²⁹ N 258:10–11

*na ca mahāmate 'kṛtakam akāritam asaṃkalpitaṃ nāma māṃsaṃ kalpyam asti
yadupādāya anujānīyaṃ śrāvakebhyaḥ* ³⁰

*Moreover, Mahāmati, it is not the case that meat is proper food and approved
for my disciples when they have neither killed it themselves, nor had someone
else kill it, nor intended for it to be killed for them.*

This variance in the vocabulary used might suggest that although the idea of *tikoṭīparisuddha* had widespread currency, there were differences of interpretation as to exactly what the three cases were which rendered meat and fish suitable for consumption by a monk or nun. In any case, the rule of threefold purity is confronted directly, with verse 12 claiming boldly that meat which meets the requirements of threefold purity simply does not exist (*naivāsti*), and that one should therefore not eat meat at all. By claiming that the requirements of threefold purity are impossible to meet in practice, this verse thus criticises of the very idea of such purity. The implication, presumably, is that if a monk or nun accepts meat in their begging bowl then that meat has by definition been 'prepared' (*kalpitaṃ*) for them, and that they are both 'requesting' (*yācitaṃ*) and 'inviting' (*coditaṃ*) such donations simply by their willingness to accept them. Indeed, the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* makes much this point explicit when it states:

*yadi ca mahāmate māṃsaṃ na kathaṃ cana ke cana bhakṣayeyur na
tannidānaṃ ghāteran | mūlyahetor hi mahāmate prāyaḥ prāṇino niraparādhino
vadyante svalpād anyahetoḥ* ³¹

*If no-one ate any kind of meat, Mahāmati, then there would be no killing in order
to produce it. Innocent living beings, Mahāmati, are generally slain for profit and
rarely for any other reason.*

In verse 19, this implied criticism is repeated, here with reference to seeing (*dṛṣṭa*), hearing (*śruta*), and suspecting (*viśaṅkā*), which parallel the way the rule is phrased in Pāli. This section of the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* argues therefore that if a monk or nun is served meat then they have by definition reason to suspect (at least) that it has been killed for them, precisely because animals are slaughtered for those who will eat them.

³⁰ N 253:10–11 The significance of the use of the terms '*akṛtakam akāritam asaṃkalpitaṃ*' will be explored in Chapter 4.

³¹ N 252:15–253:1

2.2 Ad Hominem Attacks

Not content with simply refuting the idea of threefold purity, however, the text attacks in harsh and comprehensive terms the character of those who claim that eating meat is acceptable under any circumstances, and that the Buddha approved of it. There are six types of accusations levelled at these miscreants:

- (1) Firstly, they are deluded, burdened by false and erroneous views, and guilty of sophistry. Thus, they are ‘deluded people’ (*mohapuruṣāḥ*);³² teach distorted views (*vikalpavādinah*);³³ they are not free of distorted views (*na ... avikalpāḥ*);³⁴ and they are guilty of erroneous thinking (*kalpayitvā*).³⁵ Their minds have been misled by false ideas (*mithyāvitarkopahatacetasah*);³⁶ and they are burdened by belief in a real self (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭiyuktāḥ*).³⁷ Moreover, they tie themselves in rhetorical knots in order to defend meat-eating (*māṃsabhakṣaṇahetvābhāsāṃ granthayiṣyanti*);³⁸ and they are sophists (*tārkikā*).³⁹

This line of attack is clear and unsophisticated. The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta here presents its opponents as giving expression to false views. They simply have not properly understood what the Buddha taught. As all unenlightened people can be said to be suffering from delusion and erroneous thinking to the extent that they are unenlightened, this line of attack is relatively benign. The last two characteristics quoted above are slightly more insidious, in that they imply that the text’s opponents are to some degree wilfully deluded and caught up in views (*dr̥ṣṭi*) and intellectual arguments rather than giving expression to wisdom (*prajñā*) and *insvipaśyana*.

³² N 250:4; 253:13–14; 255:9; 258:14

³³ N 250:4; 253:14–15

³⁴ N 250:7

³⁵ N 254:2

³⁶ N 253:14

³⁷ N 253:15

³⁸ N 253:15–254:1

³⁹ N 258:11 This literally means ‘logicians’ but with a connotation more like that of ‘sophists’ in English, hence my choice of that term in the translation.

(2) Secondly, they are motivated in their claim that meat-eating is acceptable simply by their own overwhelming craving for meat. They are under the influence of the habitual energy of previous existences as beings who ate flesh (*kravyādakulavāsītāvāsītāḥ*);⁴⁰ are entrenched in and fixated on their desire for the taste of meat (*rasatṛṣṇāvyavasitāḥ*),⁴¹ (*rasatṛṣṇādhyavasitāḥ*);⁴² are not free of greedy desire for the taste of meat (*na ... arasagr̥dhrāṇām*);⁴³ are not free of attachment to body, life, or pleasure (*na ... kāyajīvitabhogānādhyavasitāḥ*);⁴⁴ and are not free of ardent craving (*na ... alolupānām*).⁴⁵

This attack is linked to the first, as views (as opposed to wisdom and insight) are fundamentally an expression of craving in Buddhist thought.⁴⁶ The unambiguous implication, therefore, is that those who argue for the permissibility of meat-eating basically just really like eating meat, and have constructed their arguments for its permissibility as a kind of rationalisation, and a way of defending a practice they do not wish to give up. The link between meat-eating and craving in the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* will be explored in more depth in Chapter 5.

(3) Thirdly, they are lacking in compassion. They are not compassionate (*na ... kṛpālavah*);⁴⁷ have no desire to relate to all living beings as if they were part of themselves (*na ... sarvabhūtātmbhūtātām upagantukāmānām*);⁴⁸ and do not look upon all living beings with affection, as if each were their only child (*na ... sarvasattvaikaputrakapriyadarśinām*).⁴⁹

⁴⁰ N 250:4–5

⁴¹ N 250:5

⁴² N 253:15

⁴³ N 250:9

⁴⁴ N 250:9

⁴⁵ N 250:9–10

⁴⁶ See for example MN11:16

⁴⁷ N 250:10

⁴⁸ N 250:10

⁴⁹ N 250:10–11

In contradistinction to the bodhisattva for whom meat-eating is deemed inappropriate in our text, who is repeatedly described as compassionate (*kṛpātman*),⁵⁰ those who argue for the acceptability of meat-eating are criticised for lacking this virtue. This criticism is made both in general terms, and in more specific terms related to particular descriptions of how one who possesses this virtue should regard all living beings. Although compassion is seen as being a characteristic virtue of the Mahāyāna, the second of these specific formulations closely parallels the Karaṇīyamettāsutta,⁵¹ which enjoins:

*Mātā yathā niyaṃputta māyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe;
Evampi sabbabhūtesu, mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ.*

*Just as a mother protects her own child – her only child – with her life,
So should you cultivate this boundless attitude towards all beings.*

There is a lot more to say about the relationship between meat-eating on the one hand and the Buddhist virtues of love (*mettā/maitrī*) and compassion (*karuṇā, kṛpā*) on the other, and this will be explored in depth in Chapter 4.

- (4) Fourthly, they are lacking in many of the general virtues that characterise the exemplary Mahāyāna practitioner. They have not served the victorious ones of the past (*na ... pūrvajinakṛtādhikārāḥ*);⁵² have not planted a great many roots of virtue (*na ... avaropitakuśalamūlāḥ*);⁵³ do not possess faith (*na ... śrāddhāḥ*);⁵⁴ are not sons or daughters of good family (*na ... kulaputrāḥ kuladuhitārah*);⁵⁵ they do not belong to the family of the Buddha (*na ... śākyakulakulīnāḥ*);⁵⁶ and they are not bodhisattvas, great beings (*na ... bodhisattvāḥ mahāsattvāḥ*).⁵⁷

⁵⁰ N 245:9; 246:4; 247:9; 248:2,15,17; 249:2; 252:14

⁵¹ Snp 1.8

⁵² N 250:6–7

⁵³ N 250:7

⁵⁴ N 250:7

⁵⁵ N 250:8–9

⁵⁶ N 250:8

⁵⁷ N 250:11–12

This is a fairly standard list of epithets of the good Mahāyāna Buddhist, and appears with some variations in a very great many Mahāyāna sūtras.

- (5) Fifthly, their practice of monastic discipline is unorthodox, that is to say they follow a variety of different kinds of discipline (*vividhavinayāḥ*).⁵⁸ This, again, is a serious charge, as it is the adherence to the code of monastic discipline (*vinaya*) rather than one's views that is the real touchstone of orthodoxy (or, more correctly *orthopraxy*) for Buddhists.
- (6) Sixthly, they are deliberately slandering the Buddha by saying things that they know not to be true, in that they think that false accusations of an unprecedented nature should be made against the Buddha (*mamābhyākhyānaṃ dātavyaṃ maṃsyante*).⁵⁹ This is undoubtedly the most serious charge, as it represents the opponents of the anti-meat-eating point of view not simply as deluded or lacking in positive qualities, but as actively and perniciously dishonest. Deliberately distorting the Buddha's teaching is certainly one of the gravest accusations one can level against one's fellow Buddhists.

This six-pronged attack on the virtues and integrity of those who claim that the teachings found in the Pāli Tipiṭaka regarding meat-eating are genuine is remarkable for both its brazenness and its viciousness. Rarely in Buddhist literature – especially sūtra literature – does one find such sustained and unpleasant attacks on those who hold a different point of view. This is an indication, perhaps, of the strength of feeling this debate generated within Indian Buddhism.

2.3 The Rule of Threefold Purity as Skilful Means

The idea of *upāyakauśalya* or 'skilful means' is one of the most important doctrinal and hermeneutical innovations of Mahāyāna Buddhism (cf. Williams 2009:150ff.). It is broadly accepted by Buddhists of all schools that the Buddha taught in different ways according to the capacity of those he was speaking to. To people of more limited spiritual capacity he gave simpler teachings focused on ethics, and did not reveal more advanced ideas that might only have confused them. To those who were ready, however, he did not hold back

⁵⁸ N 250:4; 253:14

⁵⁹ N 254:1–2; 255:8

from giving pithy and direct teachings on the nature of reality. This much is evident in the presentation of the Buddha and his pedagogical methods found in the Pāli Tipiṭaka. The Mahāyāna extended this principle to its own literature, claiming that the ‘Hīnayāna’ teachings contained in recensions such as the Pāli Tipiṭaka were not exactly false, but were limited and designed for those of mediocre spiritual capabilities. The Mahāyāna teachings represented deeper truths, given only to the more spiritually advanced of the Buddha’s disciples.

Verse 16 can be read as a fairly standard example of this Mahāyāna hermeneutical approach:

*hastikakṣye mahāmeghe nirvāṇāṅgulimālike |
laṅkāvatārasūtre ca mayā māṃsaṃ vivarjitam || 8.16 ||⁶⁰*

16. *I have rejected meat-eating in the Hastikakṣya, the Mahāmegha, the Nirvāṇa, the Aṅgulimālika, and the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra.*

The sūtras referenced are all Mahāyāna sūtras, and so, it is implied, whatever might be written in the ‘Hīnayāna’ sūtras/suttas which permit meat-eating, the contents of these Mahāyāna sūtras will trump it.⁶¹

This verse is relatively straightforward, but towards the end of the text there is a somewhat confused and self-contradictory passage that uses the hermeneutics of *upāyakauśalya* to attempt to construct a more sophisticated critique of the rule of threefold purity than the flat contradiction and *ad hominem* attacks we have examined so far:

*tatra tatra deśanāpāṭhe śikṣāpadānām anupūrvībandhaṃ
niḥśreṇīpadavinyāsayogena trikoṭiṃ baddhvā na taduddīśya kṛtāni pratiśiddhāni
| tato daśaprakṛtimṛtāny api māṃsāni pratiśiddhāni | iha tu sūtre sarveṇa
sarvaṃ sarvathā sarvaṃ nirupāyena sarvaṃ pratiśiddham | yato ’haṃ*

⁶⁰ N 258:4–5

⁶¹ What these sūtras have to say about meat-eating and vegetarianism will be examined in more detail in Chapter 8.

*mahāmate māṃsabhojanaṃ na kasyacid anujñātavān nānujānāmi
nānujñāsyāmi* ⁶²

In certain places in the scriptures, precepts are arranged in successive order, linked to each other systematically like the steps of a ladder. Thus, with the rule of threefold purity having been laid down, meat which has not been killed specifically for one is not prohibited. That is the reason for the prohibition on ten kinds of meat. In this sūtra, however, any meat-eating of any kind, in any circumstances, by any means is prohibited. Therefore, Mahāmati, I have not approved of, do not approve of, and will not approve of anyone eating meat.

This passage implies – contrary to what is asserted most vehemently elsewhere in the text – that the Buddha *did* in fact teach the rule of threefold purity, and *did* permit monks and nuns to eat meat which conformed with it. Indeed, the text explicitly states that meat ‘which conforms to this rule is not prohibited’ (*na taduddīśya kṛtāni pratiṣiddhāni*). In the current sūtra though, all meat is prohibited. So far, this seems more like the kind of argument that one would expect from a Mahāyāna sūtra, and in that sense is fairly unremarkable. The Buddha laid down the rule of threefold purity for those of more limited spiritual capacity, but now he is revealing the higher teaching of strict vegetarianism to the bodhisattva Mahāmati.

What is puzzling about the use of such argumentation in this case, though, is its appearance in a text which is full of direct denial of the claim that the Buddha ever said such a thing – even as a skilful means – and biting *ad hominem* attacks on those who would dare to suggest that he had. Indeed, this very passage concludes with the Buddha claiming that he not only does not and will not approve of eating meat, but that he *has not* done so (*na kasyacid anujñātavān*) – a flat contradiction of the previous sentence but one. The jarringly contradictory nature of this passage, and the fact that it stands in such sharp relief to the argumentation used in the rest of the text might point to it being a later

⁶² N 255:1–6 It is noteworthy that, in its use of the verb *anujñā* (‘approve of’), and its use of the term *taduddīśya kṛtāni* (‘not killed specifically for one’) the vocabulary used in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta echoes that of the extract from the Vinayapiṭaka quoted above which lays down the *tikoṭṭiparisuddha* rule (the equivalent Pāli terms being *anujānāmi* and *uddissakatam*). This, I would argue, is no co-incidence, but a conscious choice on the part of the authors of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta and a demonstration of its intertextual character.

addition – an attempt to introduce a more hermeneutically sophisticated approach into a mostly highly polemic work. It may also betray the influence of the structure and style of vinaya literature, where a new rule will sometimes be inserted alongside the rule it supercedes, without the old rule being deleted.

2.4 The Ten Kinds of Prohibited Meat

As the passage quoted above alludes to, the Pāli Vinayapiṭaka does in fact represent the Buddha as banning ten kinds of meat for particular reasons. These are the flesh of: human beings, elephants, horses, dogs, snakes, lions, tigers, panthers, bears, and hyenas.⁶³ The flesh of elephants and horses is banned because these animals were symbols of royalty (*rājāṅga*) and the king might be displeased if he found out that monks were eating their flesh. Dog flesh was banned because of an apparent social taboo against its consumption – people are represented as criticising the monks for eating something so disgusting. Snake flesh was banned for the same reasons as dog flesh, and additionally on the basis of a friendly warning from a nāga king that there were some snakes who might harm monks who ate it. The ban on eating the flesh of lions, tigers, panthers, bears, and hyenas is explained by the idea that if the monks consumed the flesh of these animals, others of the same species would be able to smell that they had done so, and would attack and kill them. The ban on human flesh is contextualised by way of a story in which a monk requests meat because he is ill. No meat being available, a pious laywoman cuts out a portion of her own thigh to give to the ailing monk. When the Buddha finds out what has happened, he scolds the monk who has requested meat for not asking the laywoman where she had procured it, and lays down the rule banning the consumption of human flesh, and bans eating meat without inquiring about first.⁶⁴

On the face of it, the fact that ten specific kinds of meat are banned in the Pāli Tipiṭaka would clearly seem to imply that all other kinds of meat are *not* banned, and thus present a problem for the authors of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta. The text, however, rather shrewdly turns this rule to its advantage, stating:

⁶³ Vin i 219–220

⁶⁴ Vin i 215ff.

*śvakharoṣṭrāśvabalīvardamānuṣamāṃsādīni hi mahāmate lokasyābhakṣyāṇi
māṃsāni tāni ca mahāmate vīthyantareṣv aurabhrikā bhakṣyāṇīti kṛtvā
mūlyahetor vikrīyante yatas tato 'pi mahāmate māṃsam abhakṣyaṃ
bodhisattvasya ||⁶⁵*

*Meat from dogs, asses, buffalo, horses, oxen, human beings, and so forth are
kinds of meat that are not eaten by ordinary people, but they are sold as
suitable to eat by shepherds at the side of the road in order to make money.
Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva to eat meat from
anywhere at all.*

Thus, on the principle that you never really know what you're eating (even if you do make enquiries) the safest course of action for one who wants to be sure of avoiding these ten kinds of prohibited meat is to stick to vegetarian fare!

There are a number of other interesting points to note here. Firstly, the examples of the kind of meat that is not eaten by ordinary people do not exactly match those given in the Vinayaṭaka. Whilst dogs, horses, and human beings are present in both lists, the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta mentions asses (*khara*), buffalo (*uṣṭra*), and oxen (*balivarda*), the meat of which is not prohibited in the Vinayaṭaka (provided of course it conforms to the rule of threefold purity). The fact that two of these animals are bovine may well be an indication that the social taboo against killing cows and consuming beef had become considerably stronger and more widespread in the period between the composition of the Vinayaṭaka and the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta. The implication of the text is that even the Buddhist audience to whom the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is primarily addressed would have had qualms about eating beef. A discussion of the history of the taboo on killing cows in India is outwith the scope of this thesis,⁶⁶ but the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta provides here an interesting piece of evidence for consideration in such a discussion.

Secondly, one of the words used in the Vinayaṭaka to describe dog and snake flesh as 'disgusting' (*paṭikūla*) appears in the following passage in reference to the smell of flesh being burned / meat being cooked (here, in Sanskrit, *pratikūla*):

⁶⁵ N 246:5–9

⁶⁶ For more on this topic, see Alsdorf (1978).

*mṛtaśavadurgandhapratikūlasāmānyādapi mahāmate māṃsam abhakṣyaṃ
bodhisattvasya | mṛtasyāpi hi mahāmate manuṣyasya māṃse dahyamāne
tadanyaprāṇimāṃse ca na kaścīdgandhaviśeṣaḥ samamubhayamāṃsayor
dahyamānayor daurgandhyam*⁶⁷

*The stench of a dead body is universally considered to be disgusting.
Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva to eat meat. When
flesh is being burned, Mahāmati, whether it is the flesh of a dead person or of
another kind of living being, there is no difference in the smell. Both kinds of
flesh give off the same stench.*

A feeling of disgust in relation to the breaking of taboos is to be expected and, as modern psychological research has shown, those who become vegetarian for moral reasons also develop feelings of disgust towards the idea of eating meat.⁶⁸ Here, our text explicitly links the eating of animal flesh with the consumption of human flesh, in an attempt to activate the near-universal feeling of disgust that the latter will trigger, and transfer it by analogy to the former. The use of the same term in the Vinayaṭṭaka and the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta may, of course, be coincidence, but I would argue that there are so many instances of this type of commonality of vocabulary to be dismissed in this way, that it makes more sense to see them as providing glimpses of the text's dialogue with earlier layers of the Buddhist scriptures, and revealing its 'vertical axis'.

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta also attempts to link the desire for animal flesh with the desire for human flesh in the story it provides us with of King Siṃhasaudāsa whose desire for meat was so overpowering that he end up eating human flesh, thereby disgracing himself and losing his kingdom.⁶⁹ This story will be examined more closely in Chapter 5, but suffice it to say here that, like the passage quoted above, the inclusion of this story is an attempt to blur the boundaries between permissible and non-permissible meat which we find in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, and extend the disgust that is near-universally felt in relation to the consumption of human flesh to include all forms of meat-eating.

⁶⁷ N 248:3–6

⁶⁸ See, for example, Rozin et al, (1997)

⁶⁹ N 250:13–251:4

2.5 Did the Buddha Eat Meat?

Another significant problem the Pāli Tipiṭaka presents for those Buddhists who would argue for vegetarianism is that it presents the Buddha himself as eating meat. As the Buddha is the model for ethically pure conduct, any Buddhist who accepts that he ate meat will struggle to argue that meat-eating should be rejected on ethical grounds.

The debate over whether the Buddha did, in fact, eat meat, has mostly centred around the Mahāparinibbānasutta,⁷⁰ which describes the final weeks of the Buddha's life, his death, and its aftermath. The text presents the Buddha as dying of food poisoning, after having eaten a meal consisting of *sūkaramaddava*.

*atha kho cundo kammāraputto tassā rattiyā accayena sake nivesane paṇītaṃ
khādanīyaṃ bhojanīyaṃ paṭiyādāpetvā pahūtañca sūkaramaddavaṃ
bhagavato kālaṃ ārocāpesi*⁷¹

Then, towards the end of the night, Cunda the smith had a meal of hard and soft food, with a great quantity of sūkaramaddava prepared at his home for the Blessed One, and when the meal had been prepared he told the Blessed One that it was ready.

The meaning of the term *sūkaramaddava* is, unfortunately, unclear, and it has been the subject of much discussion and debate.⁷² The term *sūkara* means 'pig', and *maddava* '(that which is) mild, gentle, soft', so the term could be interpreted either as 'tender pork' or 'soft food eaten by pigs' (i.e. some form of fungus or mushroom such as truffles).⁷³ This ambiguity provides each side in the debate over meat-eating in Buddhism to appropriate the Mahāparinibbānasutta for their cause.

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, of course, presents the Buddha as stating unequivocally that he did not eat meat:

⁷⁰ DN ii 127 (16)

⁷¹ *ibid*

⁷² For more see Waley (1932), Wasson and Doniger O'Flaherty (1982) and Stewart (2010)

⁷³ The latter interpretation is preferred in the Chinese version of the Mahāparinibbānasutta, which describes Cunda as serving the Buddha 梅檀耳 *zhāntán ěr* (T.1.18c28) – which is either a kind of fungus or the fruit of the sandalwood tree (c.f. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism).

*na hi mahāmate āryaśrāvakāḥ prākṛtamanuṣyāhāramāharanti kuta eva
māṃsarudhirāhāram akalpyam | dharmāhārā hi mahāmate mama śrāvakāḥ
pratyekabuddhā bodhisattvās ca nāmiṣāhārāḥ prāg eva tathāgatāḥ* ⁷⁴

*My noble disciples, Mahāmati, do not even eat the food of ordinary people, and
certainly not bloody meat, which is improper. My disciples, Mahāmati, as well as
solitary buddhas and bodhisattvas – and so certainly the tathāgatas – eat the
food of the Dharma, not food made of flesh.*

⁷⁴ N 255:11–15

3 – Karma, Killing, and Meat-Eating

In this chapter, I will examine the relationship between the concept of karma on the one hand, and killing, non-violence, meat-eating and vegetarianism on the other, contrasting the positions of the Pāli Tipiṭaka with those of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra. It is essential to understand how these issues are treated in Buddhism's earliest literature if we are to understand the development of these ideas in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta in their proper historical and rhetorical context. As we shall see, many of the arguments taken up and presented in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra make most sense when read as either reinforcements or refutations of ideas which are to be found in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, further strengthening the proposition that the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta must be read intertextually in order to be properly understood.

3.1 The “Two Faces” of the Pāli Tipiṭaka’s Attitude towards Animals

When one begins to look at the attitude of the Pāli Tipiṭaka towards the treatment of non-human animals in general and the question of meat-eating and vegetarianism in particular, a certain incongruence – indeed, a certain tension – in the textual material becomes evident. In describing this tension, Paul Waldau has said that:

[I]n the Pali Canon, there are two different “faces,” as it were, to the Buddhist attitude toward other animals.⁷⁵

The first ‘face’, as Waldau uses the term, is the clear imperative to non-violence found abundantly in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, and the inclusion of non-human animals within the sphere of those who are deserving of moral concern, and whom the follower of the Buddha is conjoined to abstain from harming. The ‘second face’ consists of:

... ethical anthropocentrism (recognition of humans alone as morally considerable beings) and speciesism (humans’ favouring of their own interests,

⁷⁵ Waldau 2000:87

*often very minor in nature, over and against even major interests of all other animals solely on the irrelevant ground of species membership).*⁷⁶

Abstaining from taking life is clearly presented as a foundational element of Buddhist practice, both for the monastic and the lay follower, and this practice of non-violence is unequivocally extended to non-human animals. One might therefore reasonably expect that meat-eating would not be permitted, or at least be discouraged, in the Tipiṭaka. This, however, is clearly not the case. James Stewart summarises the position succinctly when he states:

*[A]lthough it can be argued that there is an ethical precedent for vegetarianism in Buddhism, there is also a legal precedent that appears to indicate that meat-eating is allowed.*⁷⁷

Waldau's use of Western concepts such as 'speciesism' and 'ethical anthropocentrism' is problematic in analysing Buddhist attitudes towards animals (as is discussed convincingly and at length in Sciberras 2008) and in exploring the tensions between conflicting attitudes towards animals in the Pāli Tripiṭaka, I am not doing so on the same basis as Waldau.

Rather than defining the two faces as 'speciesist' and 'non-speciesist' as Waldau does, therefore, it will be helpful to analyse them in more traditionally Buddhist terms. The conflict identified by both Waldau and Stewart between the ethical imperative to abstain from using, causing, or even approving of violence towards non-human animals on the one hand and the licence to consume meat on the other can instead be framed in terms of a distinction between a *karmic* and a *compassionate* motivation to act ethically. These two kinds of motivation for ethical action are of course to a large degree complementary, but nonetheless I wish to argue that there exists an inevitable tension between them, and that this tension finds perhaps its clearest expression in relation to the question of meat-eating. Whilst not agreeing that Waldau's use of modern, Western concepts such as speciesism and ethical anthropocentrism in his analysis is useful or appropriate, the tension he identifies in the Pāli Tipiṭaka is real. I would argue that this tension had not been resolved by the time of the composition of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, and that an understanding of it is therefore essential to an adequately contextual and intertextual reading of our text.

⁷⁶ *ibid.* 88–89

⁷⁷ Stewart 2010:110

This is the issue which I will be exploring in this chapter and the next, focusing first on the ‘karmic’ face, and in the next chapter the ‘compassionate’ face.

3.2 The First Precept and the Karmic Consequences of Taking Life

The central importance of the First Precept is underlined firstly by the simple fact that it is *first* in the lists of the Five Precepts followed by lay Buddhists (*upāsakas* and *upāsikās*),⁷⁸ the Eight Precepts followed by pious laypeople on *uposatha* days,⁷⁹ and the ten precepts followed by novices,⁸⁰ as well as being the first of the ten forms of skilful action (*kusalakamma*)⁸¹. It is found in the oldest parts of the Tipiṭaka⁸² and can with some confidence be assumed to date back to the very beginnings of the Buddhist tradition.

The precept is phrased in terms of abstention from *pāṇātipāta*. The word *pāṇā*, often translated as ‘living beings’ derives from the word for ‘breath’, and might therefore more literally be rendered as ‘breathers’ or ‘breathing beings’. The word is generally used to connote both human beings and animals. The word *atipāta* can more literally be rendered as ‘striking down’, although when it occurs as part of the compound *pāṇātipāta* it seems only to be used in the sense of killing or taking life.⁸³

The rationale for this fundamental practice of non-violence is often presented in the Tipiṭaka in terms of the karmic consequences (for both the perpetrator and the victim) of taking life. In such instances, the focus is not on the suffering of the animals killed, but on the potentially grave karmic consequences for the one who takes life, or is complicit in taking life. Whilst violence self-evidently involves suffering for the being upon whom it is inflicted, it also involves suffering – if less immediately and less obviously – for the one who inflicts it. This point is stressed repeatedly and in most graphic terms in the Tipiṭaka,

⁷⁸ The Five Precepts are listed many times in the Pāli Tipiṭaka in a variety of contexts. See AN iii 211 (5.179) for a typical example.

⁷⁹ See for example AN iv 255 (8.43); AN i 205 (3.70)

⁸⁰ See for example

⁸¹ See for example AN v 255 (10.172)

⁸² Keown 1995

⁸³ See PTSD p.19

and forms the background for the concern that a monk or nun not only avoid taking life themselves but avoid situations where they may incur the karmic responsibility for the taking of life – as discussed in the previous chapter in the context of the *tikoṭīparisuddha* rule.

In one passage in the Saṃyuttanikāya, taking life is said to cause fearful hatred “*bhayaṃ veraṃ*”, mental suffering, “*cetasikampi dukkhaṃ*”, and distress “*domanassaṃ*”, whereas for one who abstains from taking life “*pāṇātipātā paṭiviratassa*”, this fearful hatred is pacified.⁸⁴

In addition to the more immediate mental suffering which taking life is said to cause, failing to follow the First Precept will have consequences for one’s future state of rebirth. In the *Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta* in the Majjhimanikāya, the consequences of taking life for one’s future rebirth are spelled out. One who engages in violence can expect to be reborn in an state of suffering ‘*apāyaṃ*’, ‘*duggatiṃ*’, ‘*vinipātaṃ*’⁸⁵ or even in hell ‘*nirayaṃ*’. Even if they manage to attain birth as a human being, their lives will be short ‘*appāyuko*’.⁸⁶

An even more striking example is found elsewhere in the Saṃyuttanikāya, where Moggallāna, one of the Buddha’s chief disciples who was much renowned for his psychic powers, has a grotesque vision on returning from his alms round one day:

*Idhāhaṃ, āvuso, gijjhakūṭā pabbatā orohanto addasaṃ aṭṭhikasaṅkhalikaṃ vehāsaṃ gacchantiṃ. Tameṇaṃ gijjhāpi kākāpi kulalāpi anupatitvā anupatitvā phāsuḷantarikāhi vitudenti vitacchenti vibhajenti. Sā sudaṃ aṭṭassaraṃ karoti.*⁸⁷

Well friend, when I was coming down from Vultures’ Peak, I saw a skeleton moving through the air. Vultures, crows, and hawks were attacking it again and again, pecking at it between its ribs, tearing at it, and pulling it to pieces whilst it cried out in distress.

The Buddha explains that this unfortunate soul is suffering this fate because he was a cattle butcher in a previous life:

⁸⁴ SN ii 68 (12.41)

⁸⁵ These three terms are more or less equivalent in meaning here. See PTSD p.54

⁸⁶ MN 135

⁸⁷ SN 19.1

Eso, bhikkhave, satto imasmimyeva rājagahe goghātako ahoṣi. So tassa kammaṣṣa vipākena bahūni vassāni bahūni vassasatāni bahūni vassasahassāni bahūni vassasatasahassāni niraye paccitvā tasseva kammaṣṣa vipākāvasesena evarūpaṃ attabhāvapaṭilābhaṃ paṭisaṃvedayatī”tj⁸⁸

That living being, bhikkhus, used to be a cattle butcher in this very city of Rājagaha. As a result of his actions he spent many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years, many hundreds of thousands of years in hell. As the remaining result of these same actions he is experiencing this state of existence.

There are a number of other passages where the killing of animals is condemned and seen as bringing harm to the killer through the workings of karma.⁸⁹

3.3 Karma and Meat-Eating in the Pāli Tipiṭaka

The karmic consequences of meat-eating, however, are presented as being less straightforward. Whilst the actual killing of living beings is clearly seen as having very serious negative consequences in the Tipiṭaka, the act of eating the flesh of an animal which has been killed does not carry the same consequences, provided that the meat-eater avoids complicity in the act of killing itself. The *tikoṭiparisuddha* rule is designed to ensure that a monk or nun avoids such complicity, with its devastatingly negative karmic consequences.

The Jīvakaṣutta⁹⁰ makes it clear that a lay person who kills an animal in order to obtain meat to give as almsfood to a monk or nun will suffer negative karmic consequences as a result. In this text, the actual consequences are not spelled out, but what the text does

⁸⁸ *ibid*; The next nine suttas repeat the story with some variance in the details of the gruesome fate of the miscreant seen by Moggallāna, and with the previous profession related as a cattle butcher (again) (SN ii 256 (19.2)), a poultry butcher (SN ii 256 (19.3)), a sheep butcher (SN ii 256 (19.4)), a pig butcher (SN ii 257 (19.5)), a deer hunter (SN ii 257 (19.6)), a torturer (SN ii 257 (19.7)), a horse trainer (SN ii 257 (19.8)), a slanderer (SN ii 257 (19.9)), and a corrupt magistrate (SN ii 258 (19.10)).

⁸⁹ See for example MN i 339 (51); Therīgāthā 241–242; AN iii 301 (6.18); Vin i 183–185

⁹⁰ MN i 368 (55)

provide detail on is the five specific aspects of the act of killing an animal for almsfood which will have a negative karmic effect:

Yo kho, jīvaka, tathāgataṃ vā tathāgatasāvakaṃ vā uddissa pāṇaṃ ārabhati so pañcahi thānehi bahum apuññaṃ pasavati. Yampi so, gahapati, evamāha: ‘gacchatha, amukaṃ nāma pāṇaṃ ānethā’ti, iminā paṭhamena thānena bahum apuññaṃ pasavati. Yampi so pāṇo galappaveṭhakena ānīyamāno dukkhaṃ domanassaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti, iminā dutiyena thānena bahum apuññaṃ pasavati. Yampi so evamāha: ‘gacchatha imaṃ pāṇaṃ ārabhathā’ti, iminā tatiyena thānena bahum apuññaṃ pasavati. Yampi so pāṇo ārabhiyamāno dukkhaṃ domanassaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti, iminā catutthena thānena bahum apuññaṃ pasavati. Yampi so tathāgataṃ vā tathāgatasāvakaṃ vā akappiyena āsādeti, iminā pañcamena thānena bahum apuññaṃ pasavati.’⁹¹

Jīvaka, anyone who kills a living being for the sake of the Tathāgata or one of the Tathāgata’s disciples brings grave negative consequences upon themselves in five ways. When a householder says, “Go and get that living being”, this is the first way in which they bring grave negative consequences upon themselves. When that living being experiences pain and distress at being led by a rope around its neck, this is the second way in which they bring grave negative consequences upon themselves. When they say “Go and kill that living being”, this is the third way in which they bring grave negative consequences upon themselves. When that living being experiences pain and distress when it is killed, this is the fourth way in which they bring grave negative consequences upon themselves. When they give this improper food to the Tathāgata or one of the Tathāgata’s disciples, this is the fifth way in which they bring grave negative consequences upon themselves.

It is interesting to note here that two of the ways in which the act of killing brings about negative karmic consequences consist simply of the fact that the living being who is killed experiences pain and distress. This is an important reminder that the ‘karmic’ and the ‘compassionate’ motivations for abstaining from taking life are not as easily separable as they might appear.

⁹¹ MN 55

It is also noteworthy that the act of giving the improper food to the Tathāgata or one of his disciples in itself brings about negative karmic consequences. This would appear from the Jīvakaśutta to be the case even if the food in question meets the *tikoṭīparisuddha* test. It is of course perfectly possible for a householder to kill an animal to provide meat for a monk or nun without that monk or nun seeing, hearing, or suspecting that this is the case.

What is clear so far then is that a monk or nun cannot specifically request meat,⁹² and that a layperson cannot kill a living being in order to provide meat for themselves or others without suffering gravely negative consequences. Indeed, whilst meat-eating is common in Buddhist societies in the modern world, it is not common for Buddhists themselves to work as butchers, this role usually being performed by a minority group (often Muslims).⁹³

It would further appear that a layperson cannot request or order another to kill an animal on their behalf in order to obtain meat. This is made clear in a sutta in the Aṅguttaranikāya, which states:

*Catūhi, bhikkhave, dhammehi samannāgato yathābhaṭaṃ nikkhitto evaṃ niraye. Katamehi catūhi? Attanā ca pāṇātipātī hoti, parañca pāṇātipāte samādapeti, pāṇātipāte ca samanūñño hoti, pāṇātipātassa ca vaṇṇaṃ bhāsatī*⁹⁴

Monks, there are four qualities which will cause one to end up in hell, as if placed there. What are these four qualities? They are killing living beings oneself, causing others to kill living beings, approving of the killing of living beings, and speaking in praise of the killing of living beings.

As Peter Harvey comments, “Clearly, to ask a butcher to kill an animal for one is to break the first precept.”⁹⁵

Whilst it would seem feasible to simply purchase meat on the open market, and thereby avoid directly causing or encouraging another to kill an animal on one’s behalf, this was probably much less practicable in India at the time of the Buddha than it is in the present day. As Peter Harvey notes:

⁹² There are exceptions to this rule in cases of sickness (see Vin iv 87)

⁹³ Harvey 2000:162

⁹⁴ AN iv 264 (8.46)

⁹⁵ Harvey 2000:162

In the West, most food animals are killed in large abattoirs, and ‘butchers’ only sell the meat. Buddhist countries lack such large- scale slaughter-houses (they would be seen as hells on earth), and so obtaining meat is more likely to have the attendant danger of direct involvement in an animal’s death. This probably helps to reduce the extent of meat eating.⁹⁶

Moreover, in the following passage from the Aṅguttaranikāya the lay Buddhist is specifically enjoined to refrain from trading in meat, this being described as ‘wrong livelihood’:

*Pañcimā, bhikkhave, vaṇijjā upāsakena akaraṇīyā. Katamā pañca?
Sattavaṇijjā, sattavaṇijjā, maṃsavaṇijjā, majjavaṇijjā, visavaṇijjā.⁹⁷*

Monks, there are five kinds of trade that a lay practitioner should not engage in. What are these five kinds of trade? They are trade in weapons, trade in living beings, trade in meat, trade in intoxicants, and trade in poisons.

Whilst meat-eating is certainly permissible in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, therefore, there are a number of fairly stringent ethical restrictions placed on the circumstances in which both laypeople and monastics can consume flesh without suffering severely negative karmic consequences. The fact that no such restrictions or warnings are found in relation to the consumption of vegetarian food demonstrates that in the earliest records we have of the Buddhist tradition, meat-eating is seen as ethically problematic in circumstances where the meat-eater can be seen to be complicit in the taking of the life of an animal.

3.4 Karma and Meat-Eating in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta also warns of the negative karmic consequences of eating meat, and like the Pāli Tipiṭaka, it presents these consequences primarily in terms of unpleasant rebirths, not least rebirth in hell:

⁹⁶ *ibid.* 162

⁹⁷ AN iii 208 (5:177)

*lābhārthaṃ hanyate sattvo māṃsārthaṃ dīyate dhanam |
ubhau tau pāpakarmāṇau pacyete rauravādiṣu || 8.9 ||⁹⁸*

9. Living beings are killed for the sake of profit, and money is paid in exchange for meat.

Both of these evil acts bear fruit in the fires of hells such as Raurava.

*te yānti paramaṃ ghoraṃ narakaṃ pāpakarmiṇaḥ |
rauravādiṣu raudreṣu pacyante māṃsakhādakāḥ || 8.11 ||⁹⁹*

*11. These who perform such evil actions go to the most terrible of the hells.
In fierce hells such as Raurava the actions of those who devour meat bear fruit.*

There is clearly a significant element of rhetorical continuity here with the treatment of the karmic consequences of violence in earlier Buddhist literature discussed above.

However, whilst the mention of rebirth in hell is significant, the primary focus of the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* in its discussion of the unfortunate rebirths that await the meat-eater is not rebirth in hell, but rebirth in the animal realm – specifically as a carnivorous animal.

The *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* both presents human beings' craving for meat as itself being a karmic consequence of having previously lived as a carnivorous animal,¹⁰⁰ and presents birth as a carnivorous animal as a karmic consequence of eating meat – demonstrating the cyclical and mutually conditioned relationship between cause and effect.

This is illustrated in the following extract from the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta*, where Indra is presented as having had to take birth as a hawk as a consequence of meat-eating in

⁹⁸ N 257:6–7

⁹⁹ N257:10–11

¹⁰⁰ *kravyādasattvagativāsanāvāsītānāṃ māṃsabhojagrhdhāṇāṃ* (N244:5–6)

kravyādakulavāsītāvāsītānāṃ (N250:4–5) (Edgerton suggests that this is probably an error and should be read as *-vāsanāvāsītānāṃ*.)

pūrvajanmamāṃsādavāsanā (N251:6)

pūrvajanmamāṃsādadoṣavāsanatayā (N252:1)

previous existences. Because he took birth in this form, he was impelled to a further act of violence which would in its turn bring about negative consequences:

*indreṇāpi ca mahāmate devādhipatyam prāptena pūrvābhūtvā
pūrvajanmamāṃsādavāsanādoṣāc chyenarūpamāsthāya kapotaveṣarūpadhārī
viśvakarmā samabhidruto 'bhūt tulāyāṃ cātmānam āropita āsīt | yasmād
rājānaparādhībhūtānukampakaḥ śivī duḥkhena mahatā lambhitaḥ | tad evam
anekajanmātyastam api mahāmate devendrabhūtasya śakrasyāpi sataḥ
svaparadoṣāvahanamabhūt prāg eva tadanyeṣām ||¹⁰¹*

Even Indra, Mahāmati, who attained sovereignty over the gods, once had to take on the form of a hawk because of the habitual energy of a previous existence as a meat-eater. He attacked Viśvakarmā, who bore the form of a dove, and who placed himself in the balance. King Śibi felt empathy for the innocent dove, because of the great suffering it was being made to endure. If even Śakra, Mahāmati, who after many existences attained lordship over the gods, could bring affliction upon himself and others in this way, then certainly others can.

This story illustrates just how dangerous rebirth in the animal realm is for one who aspires to attain Nirvana. The effects of previous negative actions result in a rebirth where one is instinctually driven to commit further violence, thus becoming trapped in a cycle of negative karma. This point is further underlined in the following passage:

*jātiparivarte ca mahāmate tathaiva māṃsarasādhyavasānatayā
siṃhavyāghradvīpivṛkatarakṣumārjārajambukolūkādipracuramāṃsādayoniṣu
pracuratarapiśitāsanā rākṣasādighoratarayoniṣu vinipātyante | yatra
vinipatitānāṃ duḥkhena mānuṣyayonir api samāpadyate prāg eva nirvṛtiḥ ||¹⁰²*

In the cycle of birth, Mahāmati, being fixated on the taste of meat leads people to end up in the wombs of lions, tigers, leopards, wolves, hyenas, wildcats, jackals, and many other kinds of carnivorous animals. They will even fall into the wombs of the terrible rākṣasas, who are even more intent on eating flesh.

¹⁰¹ N251:5–11

¹⁰² N252:5–10

For those who have fallen into such states of existence, it is difficult to attain birth as a human being, not to speak of Nirvāṇa.

The warning here of the difficulty of attaining birth as a human being once one has fallen from the human state is well-known in Buddhist literature, the *locus classicus* being the simile of the turtle and the yoke found in the Pāli Tipiṭaka.¹⁰³ Here, the chances of attaining human birth are compared to the chances of a turtle which surfaces one every hundred years poking its head through a yoke floating somewhere on the oceans of the world.

In these two passages the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is reminding its readers of the great rarity of attaining human birth, and thereby the opportunity to attain Nirvana. Whilst this is a theme which is common in Buddhist literature, the departure which the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta represents is linking rebirth in hell and in the animal realm with the act of eating meat itself, rather than the act of killing.

Reading the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta intertextually as we have done in this chapter, therefore, reveals important elements of both continuity and discontinuity with the earlier Buddhist literature the text's audience is highly likely to have been aware of. The warnings about the negative karmic consequences of particular actions reflect the case against meat-eating being presented in terms which are familiar to the intended audience of the text. Moreover, as a Mahāyāna text, the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta would have needed to fight for acceptance, and by framing its case in the kinds of terms used by earlier, and widely accepted, Buddhist literature, it seeks to borrow the authority of this earlier literature.

Thus clothed in the rhetorical style of earlier literature, it introduces a relatively subtle shift in the way in which the karmic consequences of meat-eating are presented. Instead of the more precise language of the Pāli Tipiṭaka which leaves open a number of possibilities for eating meat without suffering the karmic consequences of taking life oneself, we find that the act of eating meat itself is presented in the same kind of terms as the act of killing an animal to obtain meat is presented in the extracts from the Suttapiṭaka discussed above.

¹⁰³ SN v 455 (56.47–48)

4 – Meat-Eating, Loving Kindness, and Compassion

In the previous chapter we examined the treatment of the karma of killing found in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, and the ways in which the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta co-opts this style of argumentation in order to clothe itself in the authority of the earlier literature whilst at the same time using it to argue a somewhat different case in relation to the question of meat-eating than the one that is found in the Pāli Tipiṭaka.

We have seen that the Pāli Tipiṭaka enjoins abstention from violence because of the negative consequences this will have upon oneself, especially in terms of one's rebirth. Taken in isolation, these passages may well give the impression that the primary motivation for the Buddhist in abstaining from taking life is self-interest – avoiding taking life so as to avoid the inevitable unpleasant karmic consequences, but quite happy for others to take life on one's behalf. One might even conclude with Alsdorf that in the case of both Buddhism and Jainism, non-violence (*ahiṃsā*):

*has nothing to do with ethics, as we understand it, but is a magic-ritualistic taboo on life which should not be destroyed in any form whatsoever.*¹⁰⁴

Whilst there is much in the Pāli Tipiṭaka which might seem to support Alsdorf's conclusion, he focuses on only one of the two 'faces' of the Tipiṭaka's attitude towards animals, and thus takes too narrow a view of the ways in which non-violence is treated in early Buddhism. The second, 'compassionate' face comprises the many instances in the Pāli Tipiṭaka where the practitioner is encouraged to develop boundless loving kindness for all living beings, and to abstain from taking life as a natural expression of this loving kindness, rather than simply an expression of one's fear of rebirth in a hell-realm.

In this chapter we will turn our attention from the rather technical issues of karma to this second, 'compassionate' face of the Pāli Tipiṭaka's attitude towards animals, and examine again the ways in which themes which are found in earlier strata of Buddhist literature are taken up by the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta and used to argue the case against meat-eating.

¹⁰⁴ Alsdorf 1978/2010:16

4.1 Loving Kindness for All Beings

One of the best-known and most celebrated suttas of the Pāli Tipiṭaka is the Karaṇīyamettāsutta, which encourages the practitioner to cultivate the following attitude:

*Mātā yathā niyaṃputta māyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe;
Evampi sabbabhūtesu, mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ.
Mettañca sabbalokasmi, mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ;
Uddhaṃ adho ca tiriyañca, asambādhaṃ averamasapattaṃ.*¹⁰⁵

*In the same way as a mother protects her only child with her life,
one should cultivate a boundless attitude towards all living beings.
One should cultivate an attitude of boundless loving kindness for the whole world,
unobstructed in all directions and free from enmity and hostility.*

This idea of regarding all living beings with the same kind of affection as a mother has for her only child was taken up with enthusiasm in the Mahāyāna, and is found in many places throughout Mahāyāna literature. In the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta we find the following passages:

*yathā ca te kravyādabhojinaḥ sattvā vinādda rasatṛṣṇāṃ
dharmarasāhārakāṅkṣayā sarvasattvaikaputrakapremānugatāḥ parasparaṃ
mahāmaitrīṃ pratilabheran |*¹⁰⁶

*Those living beings who enjoy eating flesh will abandon their craving for its
taste, long for the taste of the food of the Dharma, and attain great love for each
other, regarding all living beings with the same kind of affection as for their only
child.*

*yadi tu mahāmate anujñātukāmatā me syāt kalpyaṃ vā me śrāvakāṇāṃ
pratisevitum syān nāhaṃ maitrīvihāriṇāṃ yogināṃ yogācārāṇāṃ
śmaśānikānāṃ mahāyānasamprasthitānāṃ kulaputrāṇāṃ kuladuhitṛṇāṃ ca
sarvasattvaikaputrakasaṃjñābhāvanārthaṃ sarvāmāṃsabhakṣaṇapratīṣedhaṃ
kuryām kṛtavāṃś ca |*

¹⁰⁵ Sn 1.8 and Khp 9

¹⁰⁶ N244:6–9

If I wanted to give my approval, Mahāmati, if I considered it to be proper food to serve to my disciples, I would not prohibit all kinds of meat as appropriate to eat for sons and daughters of good family who dwell with love, spiritual practitioners engaged in spiritual practice, who go forth to cremation grounds, who have committed themselves to the Mahāyāna – and I have prohibited it, so that they might cultivate a perception of all living beings as being like their only child.

maitrīvihāriṇāṃ nityaṃ sarvathā garhitāṃ mayā¹⁰⁷

For those who dwell with love, I have condemned any kind of meat-eating for all time.

These passages closely mirror the rhetoric of the Karaṇīyamettāsutta, even using the same key terms: *ekaputra* (Pāli *ekaputta*) and *maitrī* (Pāli *mettā*). The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta takes the ideal of developing loving kindness for all living beings, which would have been accepted by all strands of the Buddhist tradition, and specifically links its development to abstention from eating meat. Thus, as we have now seen in a number of instances, the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta takes commonly accepted mainstream Buddhist ideas and rhetoric as its starting point (thereby borrowing their authority and widespread acceptability) and presents its arguments for abstention from meat-eating as being contained within or implied by those ideals.

4.2 Family Relationships and Rebirth

Although Buddhism, with its many injunctions to leave home and live a monastic life free of family responsibilities, is often seen as anti-family, this is not necessarily borne out by textual and sociological evidence. Alongside the many texts praising the virtues of the monastic life in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, there are a number where the Buddha is represented as discussing the rights and duties involved in family life in positive terms.¹⁰⁸

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta takes up the theme of family relationships in the following passage:

¹⁰⁷ N 259:2

¹⁰⁸ The most well-known of these is the Sigalovadasutta DN iii 180 (31), but other examples include Itivuttaka 106; AN ii 61 (4.55), AN i 61 (2.32); and Snp 46 (2.4).

iha mahāmate anena dīrghenādhvanā saṃsaratāṃ prāṇināṃ na asty asau kaścit sattvaḥ sulabharūpo yo na mātābhūtpitā vā bhrātā vā bhaginī vā putro vā duhitā vā anyatarānyataro vā svajanabandhubandhūbhūto vā [...] evaṃ tāvan mahāmate teṣu teṣu jātiparivarteṣu sarvasattvāḥ svajanabandhubhāvasaṃjñā sarvasattvaikaputrakasaṃjñābhāvanārthaṃ māṃsaṃ sarvam abhakṣyam kṛpātmano bodhisattvasyābhakṣyaṃ māṃsam ¹⁰⁹

In this world, Mahāmati, in the long course of saṃsāra, there is no living being who has obtained a physical form who has not been your mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter, or had some other kind of family relationship to you. [...] Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for any living beings anywhere in the cycle of rebirths who have any notion of family relationships to eat any kind of meat. This is so that they might cultivate a perception of all living beings as being like their only child.

This passage presents an appeal to its audience's sense of duty and love for their families in the context of an assumed belief that one has, in the course of countless previous existences, been in a family relationship with all living beings in existence. This belief was not a Mahāyāna innovation, but back to the Pāli Tipiṭaka:

*na so, bhikkhave, satto sulabharūpo yo namātābhūtapubbo ... napitābhūtapubbo ... nabhātābhūtapubbo ... nabhaginibhūtapubbo ... naputtabhūtapubbo ... dhītābhūtapubbo iminā dīghena addhunā.*¹¹⁰

Monks, it is not easy to find a living being who has not been your mother ... your father ... your brother ... your sister ... your son ... your daughter at one time in the past.

The idea that one's sense of family duty and filial piety (particularly in relation to one's mother), when combined with a belief in rebirth, should naturally lead one to feel a sense of loving kindness and compassion for all living beings gained currency in Mahāyāna

¹⁰⁹ N 245:10–13, 246:1–4

¹¹⁰ SN 15:14–19

Buddhism.¹¹¹ The innovation of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta was to link this idea to meat-eating by making the argument that by eating meat one is in essence consuming the flesh of one's mother, father, or children. On the surface, the passages from the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta quoted above seem to be making a primarily intellectual argument, that this is one reason why eating meat will act as a hindrance to the development of compassion – the development of compassion being of course a central concern for the Buddhist practitioner, especially the follower of the Mahāyāna. The image it creates in its readers' minds however, is surely calculated to provoke a strong emotional reaction – a sense of revulsion towards the idea of eating meat – something which becomes even clearer in the following passage:

*so 'haṃ mahāmate sarvasattvaikaputrakasaṃjñī saṃ kathamiva
svaputramāṃsam anujñāsyāmi paribhoktuṃ śrāvakebhyaḥ kuta eva svayaṃ
paribhoktuṃ |¹¹²*

When I perceive all living beings as being like my only child, Mahāmati, how could I approve of my disciples eating the flesh of my own children, and how could I eat it myself?

Attempting to evoke feelings of visceral disgust and revulsion at the idea of eating meat is in fact one of the central strategies employed by the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta to persuade its readers to abandon the practice of meat-eating.

4.3 Meat-Eating, Loving Kindness, and Fear

A theme closely related to that of loving kindness and compassion towards animals is that of fear. In the Vinayaṭīka we read of the encounter between the Buddha and the elephant Nāḷāgiri. Devadatta, the villain of the Pāli Tipiṭaka, had contrived to have this aggressive elephant released into the Buddha's path in the hope that it would kill him. However, when the elephant comes charging towards him, the Buddha simply directs loving kindness towards the animal, thereby pacifying him.

¹¹¹ This reflection is particularly common in Tibetan texts, which both preserve and build upon the later Indian Mahāyāna tradition. See the reflections on the development of compassion in Gampopa's Jewel Ornament of Liberation (Gampopa 1998:126) for a typical example.

¹¹² N 256:2–4

*Atha kho bhagavā nāḷāgiriṃ hatthiṃ mettena cittena phari. Atha kho nāḷāgiri hatthī bhagavato mettena cittena phuṭṭho soṇḍaṃ oropetvā yena bhagavā tenupasaṅkami, upasaṅkamitvā bhagavato purato aṭṭhāsi.*¹¹³

Then the Blessed One suffused the elephant Nāḷāgiri with a mind filled with loving kindness. The elephant Nāḷāgiri was affected by the Blessed One's mind filled with loving kindness, lowered his trunk, walked towards the Blessed One and stood in front of him.

This passage represents a wild animal as being sensitive to human emotions and intentions. If loving kindness was thought to have such a potentially powerful effect on animals, it follows that this would most likely be believed to apply in the case of other emotions. In the following passage, the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta presents a situation which is almost the mirror opposite of the encounter between the Buddha and Nāḷāgiri:

*udvejanakaravād api mahāmate bhūtānāṃ maitrīm icchato yogino māṃsaṃ sarvam abhakṣyaṃ bodhisattvasya | tadyathāpi mahāmate ḍombacāṇḍālakaivartādīcchapiśitāsīnaḥ sattvān dūrata eva dṛṣṭvā śvānaḥ prabhayanti bhayena maraṇaprāptāścaike bhavanty asmānapi mārayiṣyantīti*¹¹⁴

It is not appropriate, Mahāmati, for a bodhisattva whose spiritual practice is to strive to develop love to eat meat, as this will cause living beings to shake in fear. For example, Mahāmati, when a dog sees a ḍomba, an outcaste, or a fisherman who desires to eat flesh – even from a distance – he will be gripped by fear and think, “These are accomplished killers. They will kill me too.”

Here it is the desire for flesh which is sensed by animals, and provokes a response of fear, in contradistinction to the calming effect the Buddha's loving kindness produced in Nāḷāgiri.

The effect one has on other living beings is of particular importance in the Mahāyāna as for the bodhisattva it is essential to be able to come into positive relation to other beings in order to lead them to awakening. For a bodhisattva to evoke feelings of fear in those beings he encounters, therefore, is a serious matter, and represents an undermining of his or her entire mission. This point is underlined by the most oft-repeated phrase in our text:

¹¹³ Vin ii 194ff.

¹¹⁴ N 246:11–15

*māṃsaṃ sarvaṃ abhakṣyaṃ kṛpātmano bodhisattvasya*¹¹⁵

it is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva to eat any kind of meat

4.4 Meat-Eating and the Compassionate Bodhisattva

Compassion is, perhaps, the defining characteristic of the bodhisattva and it is no coincidence the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta repeatedly and explicitly links this quality to abstention from meat-eating. In the two extracts from our text quoted in the previous section the focus is not on the negative effects that meat-eating will have on the bodhisattva themselves, but on the ways in which meat-eating will undermine the bodhisattva's compassion and thereby on their ability to carry out their mission in relation to other beings.

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta refers in a number of places to *rākṣasas* – violent, demonic, flesh-eating beings which it presents as a kind of antithesis to the compassionate bodhisattva.¹¹⁶ These bloodthirsty beings are represented as being transformed into friendly vegetarians upon simply hearing the Buddha's teaching:

*rākṣasasya api mahāmate tathāgatānām imāṃ dharmasudharmatām upaśrutya
upagatarakṣabhāvāḥ kṛpālavā bhavanti māṃsabhakṣaṇavinivṛttāḥ kimuta
dharmakāmā janāḥ*¹¹⁷

Mahāmati, even rākṣasas become protectors, develop compassion, and give up eating meat when they hear the excellent nature of the Dharma of the tathāgatas. Certainly then, people who yearn for the Dharma will do the same.

The implication of this polemical passage is clear: if even these demonic creatures, 'anti-bodhisattvas' in a sense, are converted to vegetarianism simply upon hearing the Dharma,

¹¹⁵ N 245:8–9 (and with minor variations in a number of other places in the text)

¹¹⁶ Interestingly, *rākṣasas* are particularly associated with the island of Laṅkā, and the opening chapter of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra presents an encounter between the Buddha and Rāvaṇa, Lord of the *Rākṣasas*. Although now part of the same text, however, the opening chapter and the Chapter on Meat-Eating which is the focus of this thesis are both believed to have originally been composed independently, and so the common references to *rākṣasas* found in these chapters may be no more than coincidental.

¹¹⁷ N 245:17–246:1

then the faith and understanding of any Mahāyāna Buddhist who fails to do likewise must be shallow indeed.

4.5 Meat-Eating, Loving Kindness, and Disturbed Sleep

One other negative effect of meat-eating claimed by the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is that the meat-eater will sleep badly and suffer from nightmares as a result of their carnivorous diet:

*duḥkhaṃ svapiti duḥkhaṃ pratibudhyate | pāpakāṃś ca romahaṣṣaṇān
svapnān paśyanti | śūnyāgārasthitasya caikākino rahogatasya viharato
'syāmanuṣyās tejo haranti | uttrasyanty api kadācit samtrasyanty api samtrāsam
akasmāc cāpadyante¹¹⁸*

He sleeps uneasily, and he is uneasy when he awakes. He has terrifying, hair-raising dreams filled with evil. Alone in an empty house, his dwelling is lonely, and demons seize his spirit. He may be struck by terror and begin to tremble at any time, for no reason.

The Mettāsutta¹¹⁹ presents sleeping well and free from nightmares as the first of eleven benefits of cultivating loving kindness:

Sukhaṃ supati, sukhaṃ paṭibujjhati, na pāpakaṃ supinaṃ passati¹²⁰

One sleeps easily, wakes up easily, and dreams no evil dreams.

Here again the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is drawing on ideas already extant in the earlier Buddhist tradition to equate abstention from eating meat with loving kindness, and meat-eating with a deficiency of loving kindness. To make sense of the fact that the authors of our text chose this approach it makes most sense to assume not only that they possessed a detailed knowledge of earlier strata of Buddhist scripture, but that they assumed a similar familiarity on the part of their audience.

¹¹⁸ N 249:3–7

¹¹⁹ Not to be confused with the Karaṇīyamettāsutta cited earlier in this chapter.

¹²⁰ AN 11:15 (or 11:16)

4.6 The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta's Relation to the 'Two Faces'

We can see, therefore, that the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta shows an awareness of both of the 'faces' of early Buddhism's attitude towards animals that are to be found in the Pāli Tipiṭaka. Given that our text is self-consciously part of the Mahāyāna, one might have expected it to take sides, as it were, in relation to this tension between karma and compassion – rejecting the rather cold, technical, 'Hīnayānist' preoccupation with karma, and reinforcing instead the threads of the tradition which emphasise loving kindness and compassion, and would thereby seem superficially to be a more comfortable fit in a Mahāyāna context.

From what we have seen in this and the previous chapters, however, it is clear that the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta does not do this. Rather, it draws rhetoric, ideas, and imagery from both the 'karmic' and the 'compassionate' faces in arguing for abstention from eating meat. In doing so, it attempts to resolve the tension between these two attitudes towards animals by arguing, in essence, that whether one views the question of how to treat animals from the karmic or the compassionate point of view, the conclusion is the same.

5 – Meat-Eating and Desire

In this chapter we will examine the claims made in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta that there is a particular link between meat-eating and desire. We will look at the ways in which our text draws on ideas from early Buddhist texts around desire for food and the benefits of moderation in eating and adapts them to support its case against meat-eating. We will also look at the argument that the desire to consume meat is only present at a relatively low level of spiritual development, and that once a practitioner has reached a more advanced stage, it will be impossible for them to eat meat.

5.1 The Origins of the Desire for Meat

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta presents the desire for meat as being a karmic effect of having previously been born as a carnivorous animal (*kravyādakulavāsītāvāsita*). As was mentioned in Chapter 2.2, this desire is presented as one of the motivations of those who argue for the acceptability of meat-eating. This same phrase is used in the following cautionary tale of a meat-eating king and his offspring:

*anyeṣāṃ ca mahāmate narendrabhūtānāṃ satām aśvenāpahṛtānām aṭavyāṃ
paryaṭamānānāṃ siṃhyā saha maithunaṃ gatavatāṃ jīvitabhayād apatyāni
cotpāditavantaḥ siṃhasaṃvāsānvayāt kalmāṣapadaprabhṛtayo nṛpaputrāḥ
pūrvajanmamāṃsādadoṣavāsanatayā manuṣyendrabhūtā api santo māṃsādā
abhūvan | ihaiva ca mahāmate janmani saptakuṭīrake 'pi grāme
pracuramāṃsalaulyād atiprasaṅgena niṣevamānā mānuṣamāṃsādā ghorā
ḍākā vā ḍākinyaś ca saṃjāyante |¹²¹*

There was another king, Mahāmati, a lord of men whose horse carried him off into the forest. Wandering about, he had sex with with a lioness out of fear for his life. Because of their ancestry, the offspring they produced had spotted feet. Because of the evil habitual energy of previous existences as meat-eaters, the king's children were meat eaters, even after ascending to the throne. In this life,

¹²¹ N 251:12–252:5

Mahāmati, they lived in a village with seven huts, and because of their overpowering attachment and devotion to their greed for great quantities of meat, they gave birth to terrible ḍākas and ḍākinīs who ate human flesh.

The text here deliberately links meat-eating to bestiality, attempting (as in other extracts discussed above) to call forth a feeling of revulsion towards the idea of eating meat in its readers. Both the fact that the king's children were half-lion, and the fact that their meat-eating resulted in their offspring being ḍākas and ḍākinīs who ate human flesh presents meat-eating – and particularly the overpowering desire to eat meat – as making one, sooner or later, less than human. This rhetorical technique of trying to provoke revulsion is taken even further in the story of King Siṃhasaudāsa:

bhūtapūrvaṃ mahāmate atīte 'dhvani rājābhūt siṃhasaudāso nāma | sa māṃsabhojanāhārātiprasaṅgena pratisevamāno rasatṛṣṇādhyavasānaparamatayā māṃsāni mānuṣyāṅy api bhakṣitavān | tan nidānaṃ ca mitrāmātyajñātibandhuvargeṇāpi parityaktaḥ prāg eva pauraṅgāpadaiḥ svarājyaṣayaparityāgāc ca mahadvayasanaṃ sādītavān māṃsahetoḥ ||¹²²

In the past, Mahāmati, in ancient times, there was a king by the name of Siṃhasaudāsa. Because of his overpowering attachment to eating meat and his extreme craving and fixated desire for its taste, he indulged himself to the extent that he even ate human flesh. As a result of this he was shunned by his friends, ministers, family, relations, and associates, as well as the people of the towns and the country. He had to give up his crown and his kingdom, and suffer great misfortune because of meat.

Meat-eating here is presented as leading to cannibalism, at least in the case of this king. The desire for meat is so overwhelming in his case that he is willing to abandon everything else he holds dear and become a social outcaste in order to continue to consume it. The idea of cannibalism would be particularly repugnant in an Indian context because of Brahminical notions of purity whereby contact with a corpse – let alone consumption of one – renders one ritually impure. Why the Māṃsabhakṣaṅaparivarta is so concerned to

¹²² N 250:13–251:4

present the desire to eat meat as uniquely strong and overpowering will become clearer in the next section.

5.2 Moderation in Eating

Perhaps the most basic and universal statement of Buddhist doctrine is the Four Noble Truths.¹²³ This second truth states that all suffering or unsatisfactoriness (*duḥkha*) is caused by desire or craving (*tṛṣṇā*). One of the central elements of Buddhist practice therefore, particularly for monastics, has always been limiting the extent to which one indulges one's desires, particularly physical desires. Buddhist monks and nuns have with few exceptions been expected to be celibate and abstain completely from all sexual activity. Alongside the desire for sex, the desire for sleep and for food are perhaps the strongest physical desires. One cannot, of course, stop eating or sleeping, but one finds repeated injunctions in early Buddhist texts not to eat or to sleep more than is necessary in order to maintain one's health so that one can practise effectively. The following passage, found in a number of places in the Pāli Suttapiṭaka, is typical of the attitude towards eating found in early Buddhist texts:

*Kathañca, bhikkhave, bhikkhu bhojane mattaññū hoti? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu paṭisañkhā yoniso āhāraṃ āhāreti: 'neva davāya na madāya na maṇḍanāya na vibhūsanāya, yāvadeva imassa kāyassa ṭhitiyā yāpanāya vihiṃsūparatiyā brahmacariyānuggahāya'*¹²⁴

And how, monks, is a monk to practise moderation in eating? In this case, monks, a monk reflects wisely, and consumes food not for the purposes of enjoyment, intoxication, beauty, or attractiveness, but only for the purposes of maintaining and nourishing this body, refraining from violence, and supporting spiritual practice.

The idea that one's motivation for eating should not be desire, but simply the necessity of consuming food in order to maintain a healthy body which will support one's practice is

¹²³ less commonly, but perhaps more accurately, referred to as the Four Truths of the Noble Ones

¹²⁴ AN i 113 (3.16); cf. identical or near-identical passages at AN ii 39 (4.37), AN iv 166 (8.9), SN iv 175 (35.239)

graphically illustrated in the following story found in the Saṃyuttanikāya of the Pāli Suttapiṭaka:

Kathañca, bhikkhave, kabaḷīkāro āhāro daṭṭhabbo? Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, dve jāyampatikā parittaṃ sambalaṃ ādāya kantāramaggaṃ paṭipajjeyyūṃ. Tesamassa ekaputtako piyo manāpo. Atha kho tesam, bhikkhave, dvinnam jāyampatikānam kantāragatānam yā parittā sambalamattā, sā parikkhayaṃ pariyādānam gaccheyya. Siyā ca nesam kantārāveseso anatiṇṇo. [...] Atha kho te, bhikkhave, dve jāyampatikā taṃ ekaputtakaṃ piyaṃ manāpaṃ vadhitvā vallūrañca soṇḍikañca karitvā puttamaṃsāni khādantā evaṃ taṃ kantārāvesesaṃ nitthareyyūṃ. Te puttamaṃsāni ceva khādeyyūṃ, ure ca paṭipiseyyūṃ: ‘kahaṃ, ekaputtaka, kahaṃ, ekaputtakā’ti. Taṃ kiṃ maññatha, bhikkhave, api nu te davāya vā āhāraṃ āhāreyyūṃ, madāya vā āhāraṃ āhāreyyūṃ, maṇḍanāya vā āhāraṃ āhāreyyūṃ, vibhūsanāya vā āhāraṃ āhāreyyun’ti? “No hetam, bhante”. “Nanu te, bhikkhave, yāvadeva kantārassa nittharaṇatthāya āhāraṃ āhāreyyun’ti? “Evaṃ, bhante”. “Evameva khvāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kabaḷīkāro āhāro daṭṭhabbo’ti vadāmi.¹²⁵

‘How, monks, should one regard physical food? Imagine that a couple, a husband and wife, were travelling on a desert road, having brought few provisions. Their delightful, beloved only son was also with them. Then whilst travelling on that desert road, their few provisions ran out and were exhausted before they had crossed the whole of the desert. [...] Then, monks, that couple, that husband and wife, killed their delightful, beloved only son and prepared dried meat and peppered meat. By eating their son’s flesh, they were able to cross this desert. Whilst they were eating their son’s flesh they beat their breasts, crying, “Where are you, my only son? Where are you, my only son?” Do you think, monks, that they would eat that food for the purposes of enjoyment, intoxication, beauty, or attractiveness?’ ‘Certainly not, Bhante.’ ‘Would they not eat that food for the sole purpose of crossing the desert?’ ‘Indeed, Bhante.’ ‘Monks, I say that you should regard physical food in just the same way.’

Here, monks are enjoined to view eating as a necessary evil in which one should engage only to the absolute minimum extent necessary for one’s survival, and from which one should derive no sensual pleasure. Buddhist monks and nuns, of course, have traditionally

¹²⁵ SN ii 97 (12.63)

begged for alms – indeed so central is this practice to Buddhist monasticism that the very words bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī, which we translate as ‘monk’ and ‘nun’, literally mean ‘one who begs for alms’. One of the reasons for this practice is to ensure that personal preference or desire plays no part in the selection of one’s food. In fact, specifically requesting one of nine kinds of food which are identified as being particularly tasty is listed as one of the minor offences in the Pāli Vinaya:

Yāni kho pana tāni paṇṭabhojanāni, seyyathidaṃ—sappi navanītaṃ telaṃ madhu phāṇitaṃ maccho maṃsaṃ khīraṃ dadhi. Yo pana bhikkhu evarūpāni paṇṭabhojanāni attano atthāya viññāpetvā bhuñjeyya, pācittiyanti.¹²⁶

If a monk requests excellent foodstuffs – that is to say ghee, butter, sesame oil, honey, molasses, fish, meat, milk, or curds – for himself, and then eats them, he commits a pācittiya offence.

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta refers to the story from the Saṃyuttanikāya in the following two extracts:

putramāṃsabhaiṣajyavadāhāraṃ deśayaṃś cāhaṃ mahāmate katham iva anāryajanasevitam āryajanavivarjitam evamanekadoṣāvaham anekaguṇavivarjitam anṛṣibhojanapraṇītam akalpyaṃ māṃsarudhirāhāraṃ śiṣyebhyo ’nujñāpyāmi

When I have taught my disciples to regard food as if it were the flesh of their own child, or as medicine, how can I approve of bloody meat as food for my disciples – meat which ignoble people serve and noble people abstain from, which is the cause of so many faults such as those I have described and removes so many virtues, which was not offered as food to the sages, and which is improper?

bhaiṣajyaṃ māṃsam āhāraṃ putramāṃsopamaṃ punaḥ I mātrayā pratikūlaṃ ca yogī piṇḍaṃ samācāret II 22 II¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Vin iv 87 The text goes on to allow an exception from this rule against requesting excellent foodstuffs if the monk in question is ill.

¹²⁷ N 258:16–259:1

22. *'Meat should be regarded as being like medicine, or the flesh of one's own child.*

A spiritual practitioner should be averse to it when collecting alms, even in small quantities.

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta here draws explicitly on the theme of moderation in eating which is found in a number of early Buddhist texts, and more specifically on the idea that the proper attitude towards eating any kind of food is comparable to the feelings of a parent whom circumstances have forced to kill and eat their only child. I would argue that it makes most sense to assume that the authors of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta expected that their readers would be familiar with these ideas, and with the idea that meat is a particularly desirable kind of food. In early Buddhism, none of this was taken to amount to an argument against eating meat per se, as long as one received meat in the normal course of begging for alms. The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, however, has already put forward the idea that the craving for meat is a particularly strong and pernicious form of desire (as discussed in the previous section above), and that indulging it is highly karmically negative (as discussed in Chapter 3). Early Buddhism clearly regarded it as unproblematic to eat meat – or indeed any of the other nine kinds of excellent food – as long as one did not request them specifically (which would indicate that one was motivated by desire.) The implication in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, however, is that meat-eating will always be motivated by a particularly strong form of craving, and therefore that one should abstain from it entirely. The rhetoric of the text here is, therefore, both fairly sophisticated and quite heavily reliant on its readership's familiarity with early Buddhist texts such as the ones cited from the Pāli Tipiṭaka. The shift from regarding meat (along with fish and the other excellent foodstuffs listed) as being more desirable than ordinary food to regarding the consumption of meat as always being motivated by strong craving is a subtle one, and this subtlety would have made its arguments much more likely to sound persuasive to its intended audience.

5.3 The Food of the Dharma

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta not only links meat-eating to desire in the fairly concrete ways discussed above, however. It also takes a much more philosophical turn, introducing the notion of the *dharmakāya* (Pāli *dharmakāya*). This idea, that the Buddha's true body

was not his physical body of flesh and blood but a body of Dharma is found in early Buddhist texts such as the Pāli Tipiṭaka. The following well-known extract is from the Vakkali Sutta. When Vakkali tells the Buddha of his desire to see him, the Buddha responds:

*Alaṃ, vakkali, kiṃ te iminā pūtikāyena diṭṭhena? Yo kho, vakkali, dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati; yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati. Dhammañhi, vakkali, passanto maṃ passati; maṃ passanto dhammaṃ passati.*¹²⁸

Oh Vakkali, why do you want to see this putrid body? Anyone who sees the Dhamma, Vakkali, sees me. Anyone who sees me sees the Dhamma. By seeing the Dhamma, Vakkali, you see me. By seeing me, you see the Dhamma.

This idea was emphasised and developed in the Mahāyāna, and is discussed in a great many Mahāyāna texts. Perhaps the most famous example is from the Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sutra:

*ye māṃ rūpeṇa adrākṣur ye māṃ ghoṣeṇa anvayuh
mithyāprahāṇaprasṭā na māṃ draṅsyanti te janāḥ
draṣṭavyo dharmato buddho dharmakāyas tathāgataḥ
dharmatā cāpy avijñeyā na sā śakyaṃ vijānitum*¹²⁹

Those who saw me by my body and followed me by my voice have made the wrong kind of effort. Those people will not see me.

A Buddha should be seen from the Dharma; the Guides have Dharma-bodies.

Yet the nature of the Dharma is not knowable. It cannot be known.

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta takes up this widely-known Buddhist idea and presents it as an argument against meat-eating:

*na hi mahāmate āryaśrāvakāḥ prākṛtamanuṣyāhāramāharanti kuta eva
māṃsarudhirāhāram akalpyam | dharmāhārā hi mahāmate mama śrāvakāḥ
pratyekabuddhā bodhisattvās ca nāmiṣāhārāḥ prāg eva tathāgatāḥ |*

¹²⁸ SN iii 119 (SN 22.87) See also DN iii 84 (DN 27)

¹²⁹ Schopen 1989:10b10–11a1

*dharmakāyā hi mahāmate tathāgatā dharmāhārasthitayo nāmiṣakāyā na sarvāmiṣāhārasthitayo vāntasarvabhavopakaraṇatṛṣṇaiṣaṇāvāsanāḥ*¹³⁰

My noble disciples, Mahāmati, do not even eat the food of ordinary people, and certainly not bloody meat, which is improper. My disciples, Mahāmati, as well as solitary buddhas and bodhisattvas – and so certainly the tathāgatas – eat the food of the Dharma, not food made of flesh. The tathāgatas, Mahāmati, have Dharma-bodies and they nourish themselves with the food of the Dharma. They do not have bodies of flesh and they do not nourish themselves with any kind of food made of flesh. They have expelled the habitual energy of the longing and the desire which maintain all states of existence.

The argument presented here, again with a good deal of rhetorical subtlety is based on the idea that the true bodies of the buddhas (and indeed of bodhisattvas and śrāvakas) is not a body of flesh and blood, but a Dharma-body. In this sense, they do not eat physical food, but draw their nourishment from the Dharma. This much would be uncontroversial, but the text goes further, stating that if they do not eat physical food at all, they would certainly not eat food made of flesh. This argument relies on a deliberate muddling of two levels of discourse. On the philosophical level one can argue that Buddhas do not eat physical food at all because their true bodies are Dharma bodies which do not require physical nourishment. On the physical level, however, Buddhas certainly do eat physical food. This rhetorical trick is facilitated by the fact that the words *māṃsa* and *āmiṣa* can mean either ‘meat’ or ‘flesh’ depending on the context. This flexibility of meaning lends the phrase ‘nāmiṣakāyā na sarvāmiṣāhārasthitayo’ a lovely poetic balance.

5.4 Desire and Perception

Another brief but important philosophical point is made in the following extract:

*rūpālambanavijñānapratyayāsvādajanakatvād api sarvabhūtātmabhūtasya kṛpātmanah sarvaṃ māṃsam abhakṣyaṃ bodhisattvasya*¹³¹

¹³⁰ N 255:11–17

¹³¹ N 248:14–16

Because perceiving physical forms brings about the desire to taste them, it is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva who regards all beings as himself to eat any kind of meat.

One of the principal differences between a buddha or a bodhisattva and an ordinary person is that the awakened being sees things as they are, with wisdom. The idea implicit here that a true bodhisattva, possessing both wisdom and compassion, does not perceive physical forms. This passage is a reference to the strand of Buddhist thought put forward in the main sections of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra itself. The following passage is a good example:

*svacittadṛśyamātrānavabodhān mahāmate bālapṛthagjanā
bāhyavicitrabhāvābhiniveśena ca nāstyastitvaikatvānyatvobhaya naivāsti na
nāsti nityānityasvabhāvavāsanāhetuvikalpābhiniveśena vikalpayanti¹³²*

Only perceiving the projections of their own minds, Mahāmati, ordinary immature beings engage in conceptualisation because they are attached to different kinds of external objects, and because they are attached to their habitual tendency to conceptualise existence and non-existence, oneness, otherness, things being both or neither, permanence and impermanence as having an essential nature.

One of the main ideas in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra is that what we perceive is nothing but the projections of our own mind (svacittadṛśya). The implication in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is that because the motivation to eat meat is desire for something outside of one's own consciousness, it follows that a bodhisattva who has penetrated the reality of the perceptual situation will not experience craving for external objects. If one assumes (as does the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta) that the only motivation for eating meat is desire, a bodhisattva would not then eat meat. This idea is reinforced in the following two verses:

*āhārāj jāyate darpaḥ saṃkalpo darpaśambhavaḥ |
saṃkalpajanito rājastasmād api na bhakṣayet || 7 ||¹³³*

¹³² Vaidya 1963:38

¹³³ N 257:2–3

7. *'Eating meat leads to arrogance, and arrogance brings about distorted perceptions.*

Distorted perceptions lead to greed, and so one should not eat meat.

*saṃkalpāj jāyate rāgaścittaṃ rāgeṇa muhyate |
mūḍhasya saṃgatir bhavati jāyate na ca mucyate || 8 ||¹³⁴*

8. *'Distorted perceptions lead to greed, and a mind filled with greed is deluded by it.*

Being afflicted by delusions leads to birth, not to liberation.

The fact that the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta here refers to ideas discussed at length in other parts of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra could be taken as evidence that this chapter is indeed an integral part of the sūtra, rather than an independent text which was tagged on. However, the key terminology used is different – the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta talks of *rūpa* and *vijñāna*, whereas the extract from earlier in the sūtra refers to *bhāva* and *avabodha*. Whilst the passage quoted from the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is clearly referring to ideas not discussed fully in the text itself, and is thus an example of intertextuality, we cannot therefore take it as likely to be a reference to the main sections of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra.

5.5 Meat-Eating as a Hindrance to Spiritual Practice

The implication of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta's discussion of desire and craving in the context of meat-eating is that Buddhist practitioners who eat meat will be at a disadvantage in their practice as compared to their vegetarian brethren. This is made explicit in the following extracts:

*śmaśānikānāṃ ca mahāmate araṇyavanaprasthāny amanuṣyāvacarāṇi
prāntāni śayanāsanānyadhyāvasatāṃ yogināṃ yogācārāṇāṃ maitrīvihāriṇāṃ
vidyādharāṇāṃ vidyāsādhayitukāmānāṃ vidyāsādhanamokṣavighnakaratvān
mahāyānasamprasthitānāṃ kulaputrāṇāṃ kuladuhitṛṇāṃ ca*

¹³⁴ N 257:4–5

*sarvayogasāadhanāntarāyakaram ity api samanupaśyatām mahāmate
svaparātmahitakāmasya māṃsam sarvam abhakṣyaṃ bodhisattvasya* ¹³⁵

When sons and daughters of good family, Mahāmati, who have committed themselves to the Mahāyāna, spiritual practitioners engaged in spiritual practice, who dwell with love, who know incantations and wish to perform them, go forth to cremation grounds, to the forest wilderness, to far-off places, to places inhabited by demons, to a hut or some other place to meditate, they are hindered in accomplishing incantations and in attaining liberation. Thus, Mahāmati, seeing that it creates obstacles to all kinds of spiritual practice and accomplishment, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva who desires to bring benefit to themselves and others to eat any kind of meat.

*yathaiva rāgo mokṣasya antarāyakaro bhavet |
tathaiva māṃsamadyādya antarāyakaro bhavet || 20 ||* ¹³⁶

20. 'Just as greed is a hindrance to liberation, so too meat, intoxicants and so forth are hindrances to liberation.

This is really the nub of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta's line of argumentation in relation to meat-eating and desire. Whilst, as we saw in the previous chapter, the text does clearly present compassion as a major motivation for giving up meat, the main thrust of it's case is that meat-eating will make it more difficult to attain awakening. This focus on the benefits vegetarianism will accrue to the individual practitioner is one of the most significant ways this text differs from modern Buddhist arguments for vegetarianism, which rely much more on pricking the reader's conscience with a focus on the plight of the animals slaughtered. ¹³⁷

¹³⁵ N 248:8–14

¹³⁶ N 258:12–13

¹³⁷ See for example Kapleau 1981, Bodhipakṣa 1999

6 – Meat-Eating and Public Relations

One of the most interesting aspects of the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* in terms of intertextuality is the text's explicit acknowledgement of the fact that Buddhism existed in competition with other religious traditions, and that Buddhist laxity with regard to meat-eating would affect its ability to compete effectively. In this chapter we will examine how an awareness of the need to compete with other religious traditions for the support of laypeople is evidenced in Vinaya texts, and how the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* makes use of the existence of this perennial challenge to Buddhism's survival to press its case for vegetarianism.

6.1 The Need to Compete

The *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* presents arguments against meat-eating which are similar in tone and content to reasons given in Vinaya texts for instituting particular rules. These rules are not explained or justified in ethical terms, but on the basis of the fact that if monks were to act in a certain way, laypeople would be offended or scandalised and withdraw their support. As Damian Keown puts it:

*Buddhist monks were dependent on the laity for alms and would not wish to appear less rigorous in their eyes than rival religious groups. Many monastic precepts came about directly as a result of complaints from the laity, and these complaints often explicitly compare the behaviour of Buddhist monks with that of rival mendicant groups.*¹³⁸

One such example cited by both Keown¹³⁹ and Chapple¹⁴⁰ is the rule introducing the observance of the rains retreat:

¹³⁸ Keown 1995:33–34

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Chapple 1993:22

Tena kho pana samayena bhagavatā bhikkhūnaṃ vassāvāso apaññatto hoti. Tedha bhikkhū hemantampi gimhampi vassampi cārikaṃ caranti. Manussā ujjhāyanti khiyyanti vipācenti—“kathañhi nāma samaṇā sakyaputtiyā hemantampi gimhampi vassampi cārikaṃ carissanti, haritāni tiṇāni sammaddantā, ekindriyaṃ jīvaṃ viheṭhentā, bahū khuddake pāṇe saṅghātaṃ āpādentā. Ime hi nāma aññatitthiyā durakkhātadhammā vassāvāsaṃ allīyissanti saṅkasāyissanti. Ime hi nāma sakuntakā rukkhaggesu kulāvakāni karitvā vassāvāsaṃ allīyissanti saṅkasāyissanti. Ime pana samaṇā sakyaputtiyā hemantampi gimhampi vassampi cārikaṃ caranti, haritāni tiṇāni sammaddantā, ekindriyaṃ jīvaṃ viheṭhentā, bahū khuddake pāṇe saṅghātaṃ āpādentā”ti.¹⁴¹

Now at that time the Blessed One had not instituted a rains retreat for monks, so they wandered during the cool season, the hot season, and the rainy season. People were offended and angered by this, and criticised the monks saying, “How can these renunciants, Sons of the Sakyan, wander during the cool season, the hot season, and the rainy season – trampling the green grass, harming life forms with a single faculty, and causing many small creatures to be killed? Non-Buddhists who proclaim a false Dharma will come together to observe the rains retreat. Birds will come together to observe the rains retreat when they have made their nests in trees. And yet these ascetics, Sons of the Sakyan, wander during the cool season, the hot season, and the rainy season – trampling the green grass, harming life forms with a single faculty, and causing many small creatures to be killed.”

Here we see not only that the impetus for formulating a rule is laypeople’s criticism and unfavourable comparison with non-Buddhist traditions, but also that the basis of this criticism is a perceived laxity in the practice of non-violence.

The following passages from the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta closely parallel the reasoning in the passage quoted above:

¹⁴¹ Vin i 137. A similar example is the rule on the introduction of the observance of uposatha days at Vin i 101.

*durākhyātdharmair api tāvad bhagavann anyatīrthikair
lokāyatadr̥ṣṭyabhiniviṣṭaiḥ sadasatpakṣocchedaśāśvatavādibhir māṃsaṃ
nivāryate bhakṣyamāṇam svayaṃ ca na bhakṣate* ¹⁴²

Blessed One, even non-Buddhists who proclaim a false Dharma, who are devoted to materialist doctrines, who put forth the positions of existence or non-existence, or who teach annihilationism or eternalism prohibit meat-eating and do not eat it themselves.

*bhavanti loke śāsanāpavādavaktāraḥ kiṃcit teṣāṃ śrāmaṇyam kuto vā
brāhmaṇyam yannāmaite pūrvar̥ṣibhojanāny apāsya kravyādā ivāmiṣāhārāḥ
paripūrṇakukṣayaḥ khabhūmijalasaṃnīśritān sūkṣmāṃs trāsayanto jantūn
samutrāsayanta imaṃ lokaṃ samantataḥ paryaṭannihatam eṣāṃ śrāmaṇyam
dhvastam eṣāṃ brāhmaṇyam nāsty eṣāṃ dharmo na vinaya ity
anekaparakārapratihatacetasāḥ śāsanam evāpavadanti* ¹⁴³

[T]here are people in this world who speak ill of the Buddha’s teaching, saying “Why do these people who are supposedly living the life of a renunciant or a brahmin reject the food of the sages of old, and eat flesh like carnivorous animals with full bellies, terrifying minute creatures of the air, the earth, and the water, bringing terror to all about them as they wander through this world? These people destroy the renunciant life, they obliterate the brahmin life. There is neither Dharma nor discipline in them.” There are many kinds of people with a hostile attitude who speak ill of the Buddha’s teaching in this way.

The first passage points out that abstention from meat-eating is widely practised in other competing traditions, and the second makes the claim that the fact that Buddhists are known to eat meat damages their reputation. The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta’s authors thus employ a line of argument that would resonate with readers familiar with Vinaya texts such as the one quoted above, and adapt it to their own ends.

In addition to the strong similarity in rhetoric between the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta passages and the Vinaya passage, we find an almost exact lexical parallel in the derogatory phrase used to describe rival sects: *aññatitthiyā durakkhātadhammā* in the Pāli

¹⁴² N 244:12–14

¹⁴³ N 247:10–16

Vinaya, and *durākhyātadharmair ... anyatīrthikair* in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta. This further supports the idea that the authors of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta (as well as its intended readership) were familiar with Vinaya texts similar to the one quoted, and that they employed a deliberate strategy of intertextuality in order to lend their case force and legitimacy.

6.2 Competition with Jainism

The Vinaya passage on the institution of the rains retreat quoted above is interesting not only because of the rhetorical and lexical parallels with the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, but also because of what it reveals about who its authors saw as threatening to outdo the Buddhists in their practice of non-violence, and thereby outcompete them in gaining the support of the laity.

The criticism that the text presents as having been directed against Buddhist monks who wandered about during the rainy season is not simply that they would kill small creatures, but also that they would trample grass and harm life forms with a single faculty (*ekindriyaṃ jīvaṃ*). The use of this particular phrase is telling, as the categorisation of life forms according to the number of faculties they possess is a typically Jaina, rather than Buddhist, idea. One of the distinctive features of Jainism in the context of Indian religion is that Jainas regard almost everything as possessing or containing life (*jīva*).¹⁴⁴ Jainism categorises life-forms according to the number of faculties they possess. The lowest forms of life are *nigoda*, which are born together in clusters and reside in flesh, and the next lowest are earth, water, fire, and air bodies. These two lowest forms of *jīva* are regarded as possessing only one faculty (*ekindriya*), the faculty of touch.¹⁴⁵ Buddhists, however, neither recognise the existence of these lowest forms of life categorised by the Jainas,¹⁴⁶ nor commonly use the phrase *ekindriyaṃ jīvaṃ*. Whilst Jainas were concerned not to harm anything which was alive (and regarded almost everything as either being alive or containing life), Buddhists' concern was restricted to conscious life.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Chapple 1993:11

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*:11–12

¹⁴⁶ Gombrich 2009:51

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*:52

Despite this, there are passages in the Pāli Tipiṭaka which indicate that Buddhists should avoid damaging plants or seeds.¹⁴⁸ This should not necessarily be taken to mean, however, that Buddhists saw destroying plant life as unethical in itself. In the following passage, Damian Keown comments on passages which instruct or encourage monks to avoid harming insects and microbes, and the same principle applies to plant life:

Buddhism allows moral status to animals, and often seems to extend this to insects and microbes. We read in the early sources, for example, that monks used water-strainers to avoid harming the tiny organisms that live in the water. [n:Vin iv 125] They also took up settled residence in the rainy season, in part to avoid treading upon the tiny creatures which come to life after the rains. [n:Vin i 137] Do these factors show that the Buddhist respect for life extends to the microscopic level? There is reason to hesitate before drawing this conclusion. One problem is that it is difficult to be sure whether these practices were inspired by moral concern or driven by lay expectations in a competitive religious environment.

For Jainas, however, the practice of non-violence extends to not only insects and microbes, but also plant life, as this verse from the Ācārāṅgasūtra (Jainism's earliest extant text)¹⁴⁹ demonstrates:

*Jamiṇam virūvarūvehiṃ satthehiṃ vanassai-kamma-samārambheṇam
vaṇassaisatthaṃ samārambhamāṇe aṇṇe vaṇegarūve pāṇe vihiṃsati.*

He (pseudo-monk), employing various kinds of weapons, indulges in actions involving vegetable, (thereby) causing violence to the beings of vegetable-body. (He causes violence not only to the beings of the vegetable-body, but also) causes violence to different kinds of other beings.¹⁵⁰

The criticism quoted in the Vinaya passage on the introduction of the rains retreat appears quite clearly, therefore, to be coming from a Jaina perspective – both in terms of the reference to plant life being destroyed, and the reference to life forms with a single faculty.

¹⁴⁸ e.g. DN i 127 (5)

¹⁴⁹ Chapple 1993:3

¹⁵⁰ Kumar 1981:53 (The English translation given here is Kumar's.)

At the time the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta was authored, Jainism was still an important and influential factor in the religious landscape of India, and the passages from the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta quoted above show that the need to be seen to be rigorous in the practice of non-violence in order to compete effectively with rival sects was still a relevant and pressing issue. Moreover, whilst the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, unlike the Pāli Vinaya, does not make explicit mention of ‘life forms with a single faculty’, (*ekindriyaṃ jīvaṃ*) it seems to me that the reference to ‘minute creatures of the air, the earth, and the water’ (*khabhūmijalasaṃniśritān sūkṣmāṃs*), can most plausibly be understood to be a reference to the peculiarly Jaina belief in such creatures.

Of all the religious traditions in India, it is Jainism which has been most strongly associated with the practice of non-violence in general, and abstention from eating meat in particular. Whilst ethical vegetarianism in India may well have its roots in Jainism, the idea of abstaining from eating meat was one which influenced and spread to other traditions, so we cannot be certain that the “non-Buddhists who proclaim a false Dharma” the authors of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta had in mind were necessarily Jainas. What we can say is that the existence of the a Buddhist text such as the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta which argues in such strong terms against meat-eating is in itself evidence that the idea of ethical vegetarianism had grown in influence from the time that the Pāli Tipiṭaka and other early Buddhist texts were authored. As Prasad points out:

In the scriptures there is no reference to any case in which the Buddha or his disciples in the Saṅgha were criticised for eating meat. Even the allegation of the followers of Nigaṇṭhanātaputta [i.e. Jainas] was not against eating meat as such but against eating meat prepared by killing an animal specially for him.¹⁵¹

The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is evidence that by the 4th century CE this was no longer the case.

6.3 Competition with Brahminism

Whilst it seems fairly clear that it was principally the Jainas that early Buddhists felt might outdo them in the practice of non-violence, by the time the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta was

¹⁵¹ Prasad 1971:293

authored, there is evidence that the practice of vegetarianism had become more widespread, and was indeed relatively common in the Brahminical tradition as well as within Buddhism and Jainism. Evidence for this can be found in the Dharmaśāstras, and in particular in the Manusmṛti.¹⁵² Olivelle dates the Manusmṛti to the 2nd or 3rd century CE,¹⁵³ which would mean that it was most likely composed not long before, or at approximately the same time as, the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta.

There are a number of verses in the Manusmṛti that make the case for vegetarianism as part of a practice of non-violence in a clear and unambiguous way. For example:

*nākṛtvā prāṇināṃ hiṃsāṃ māṃsam utpadyate kva cit |
na ca prāṇivadhaḥ svargyas tasmān māṃsam vivarjayet || 5.48 ||*¹⁵⁴

*It is not possible to produce meat without harming living beings
and one who kills living beings will not come to heaven.
Therefore, one should abstain from meat*

There are, however, other verses which seem to contradict this position. For example, the following two verses clearly present meat-eating as not only acceptable but divinely ordained:

*prāṇasyānnam idaṃ sarvaṃ prajāpatir akalpayat |
sthāvaraṃ jaṅgamaṃ caiva sarvaṃ prāṇasya bhojanam || 5.28 ||*

*carāṇām annam acarā daṃṣṭriṇām apy adaṃṣṭriṇaḥ |
ahastās ca saḥastānāṃ sūrāṇāṃ caiva bhīravaḥ || 5.29 ||*¹⁵⁵

*Prajāpati, the Lord of Animals, created all this as sustenance for life,
that which is stationary and that which is mobile is all food for life.*

¹⁵² Alsdorf comments that in the Dharmaśāstra literature, it is the Manusmṛti that deals most fully with the topic of vegetarianism and meat-eating. (Alsdorf 1978/2010:43)

¹⁵³ Olivelle 2005:24-25

¹⁵⁴ Shastri 1983: Ch.5, v.48

¹⁵⁵ ibid, Ch.5, vv.28–29

*That which does not move is sustenance for that which moves,
as are those which have no teeth for those who do have teeth,
those without hands for those who do have hands, and the timid for the bold.*

In his influential study, *The History of Vegetarianism and Cow-Veneration in India*, Alsdorf provides the solution to this apparent contradiction:

[I]t is to be borne in mind that, in this most authoritative code of Indian customs and laws, a fundamental change of view and custom has found expression to the effect that the old and new are, not infrequently, simply placed in juxtaposition to, or rather after, each other, regardless of the flagrant contradictions resulting from it.¹⁵⁶

What this means is that in the contradictory statements about meat-eating presented in the Manusmṛti, two distinct stages of development in the Brahminical tradition's attitudes towards meat-eating and vegetarianism can be discerned. Verse 48 represents a later stage of development where vegetarianism had become more common, whereas verses 28–29 represent an earlier stage where meat-eating was much more widely accepted.

Alsdorf points out a similar trend in the Mahābhārata, which has a close connection to the Manusmṛti.¹⁵⁷

In the didactic portions of the epic the debate between animal-sacrifice and ahimsā, between meat-eating and vegetarianism is at a peak [but] in the old parts, the epic legend proper, hunting and meat-eating by the heroes are a completely unproblematic matter.¹⁵⁸

One of the points made in favour of vegetarianism in the Mahābhārata is that the Vedic sages recommended abstention from meat. In the Anuśāsana Parva, for example, we find the following verse:

¹⁵⁶ Alsdorf 1978/2010:16–17

¹⁵⁷ *ibid*:31

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*:32

*saptarṣayo vā lakhilyās tathaiva ca marīcipāḥ
amāṃsabhakṣaṇaṃ rājan praśaṃsanti manīṣiṇaḥ*¹⁵⁹

*The wise ones, the Seven Sages, the Vā lakhilyas and the Light Drinkers,
all praise abstention from meat most highly.*

There are a number of hymns in the Ṛgveda attributed to the Seven Sages and the Vā lakhilyas, and the Mahābhārata here is invoking their authority in the cause of vegetarianism.¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, despite being a Buddhist text, does the same:

*ṛṣibhojanāhāro hi mahāmate āryajano na māṃsarudhirāhāra*¹⁶¹

*Noble people, Mahāmati, do not offer bloody meat when they make offerings of
food to the sages*

*kiṃcit teṣāṃ śrāmaṇyam kuto vā brāhmaṇyam yannāmaite pūrvarṣibhojanāny
apāsya*¹⁶²

*Why do these people who are supposedly living the life of a renunciant or a
brahmin reject the food of the sages of old...?*

*katham iva nāryajanasevitam āryajanavivarjitam evamanekadoṣāvaham
anekaguṇavivarjitam anṛṣibhojanapraṇītam akalpyaṃ māṃsarudhirāhāraṃ
śiṣyebhyo 'nujñāpyāmi || anujñātavān punar ahaṃ mahāmate
sarvāryajanasevitam anāryajanavivarjitam anekaguṇavāhakam
anekadoṣavivarjitaṃ sarvapūrvarṣipraṇītaṃ bhojanam*¹⁶³

*[H]ow can I approve of bloody meat as food for my disciples – meat which
ignoble people serve and noble people abstain from, which is the cause of so*

¹⁵⁹ Mahābhārata 13,116.011

¹⁶⁰ One must of course point out that this claim is somewhat dubious. Although there are a few well-known verses (X.87.16–19) that appear to argue against meat-eating, the Ṛgveda contains many more instances of explicit or tacit approval of meat-eating. For our purposes, however, what is interesting is that the Mahābhārata makes such a claim, rather than how well-founded it may be.

¹⁶¹ N 247:5–6

¹⁶² N 247:10–12

¹⁶³ N 249:11–250:1

many faults such as those I have described and removes so many virtues, which was not offered as food to the sages, and which is improper? The food I approve of, Mahāmati, is that which all noble people serve and ignoble people abstain from, that which brings about many virtues and removes many faults, that which was offered as food to all the sages of old

By the time of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, abstention from meat-eating had become more commonly expected as an expression of rigour in the practice of *ahiṃsā* than it was at the time of the composition of early Buddhist texts such as the Pāli Tipiṭaka. Buddhists were thus now feeling pressure to demonstrate their commitment to non-violence by abstaining from meat not only from Jainism, but also from the Brahmnical tradition.

7 – Meat-Eating and Purity

We saw in the previous chapter that the authors of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta were aware of not only Jainism, but also the Brahminical tradition as presenting a threat in terms of competition for the support of laypeople. In addition to warning that the practice of meat-eating will bring Buddhism into disrepute, the text argues for vegetarianism by explicitly referring to its supposed practice by the Vedic sages. What is even more remarkable in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta's relationship to the Brahminical tradition and Brahminical texts is its seemingly uncritical adoption of a Brahminical conception of purity and impurity – one which is flatly contradicted in a large number of early Buddhist texts.

In this chapter, we will explore the tension between the conception of purity in early Buddhism as found in the Pāli Tipiṭaka and that of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta. We will also look at the related issues of smell, varṇa, and disease, and discuss to what extent the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta's treatment of these three areas also indicates a dialogue with texts from the Brahminical tradition.

7.1 Brahminical Notions of Purity and Impurity

For anyone familiar with Buddhist notions of purity and impurity, the following sentence from the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is striking:

*śukraśoṇitasambhavādapi mahāmate śucikāmatām upādāya bodhisattvasya
māṃsam abhakṣyam* ¹⁶⁴

*It is not appropriate, Mahāmati, for a bodhisattva who loves purity to eat meat
that comes from the union of semen and blood.*

This idea of impurity – that particular physical substances are be pure or impure – is commonplace in the Brahminical tradition, but runs completely counter to the idea of impurity found in early Buddhist texts.

I.B. Horner summarises the position of Early Buddhism on meat-eating and purity in the following passage:

¹⁶⁴ N 246:10–11

Yet perhaps the reason, which weighed most heavily in condoning the eating of fish and meat, was the strong conviction that it was not material things that made or marred a man. Early Buddhism did not agree with the supposition that purity comes through food. Purification comes, it held, by restraint over such bodily, mental and moral conduct as could defile a man, and with the possession of moral habit. It did not consider it to be in his outward signs: his wearing his hair matted in the braids of an ascetic, his birth or his clan, which made a man a true Brahmin. It was not these things, nor his abstinence from fish and meat, which cleansed a man who had not crossed over doubt. For it was not the eating of meat, na hi māṃsabhojanam, which sullied him and was his defilement, āmagandha, but any one out of a long array of wrongs which he might perpetrate by conduct, thought or speech. He was neither defiled nor purified by what he ate, nor was he cleansed by fasting.¹⁶⁵

The following sutta from the Aṅguttara-nikāya presents the mainstream Buddhist view of purity – that it is not physical substances, but rather unethical actions and mental states that render one pure or impure:

Tīṇimāni, bhikkhave, soceyyāni. Katamāni tīṇi? Kāyasoceyyaṃ, vacīsoceyyaṃ, manoceyyaṃ. Katamañca, bhikkhave, kāyasoceyyaṃ? Idha, bhikkhave, ekacco paṇātipātā paṭivirato hoti, adinnādānā paṭivirato hoti, kāmesumicchācārā paṭivirato hoti. Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, kāyasoceyyaṃ.

Katamañca, bhikkhave, vacīsoceyyaṃ? Idha, bhikkhave, ekacco musāvādā paṭivirato hoti, pisuṇāya vācāya paṭivirato hoti, pharusāya vācāya paṭivirato hoti, samphappalāpā paṭivirato hoti. Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, vacīsoceyyaṃ.

Katamañca, bhikkhave, manoceyyaṃ? Idha, bhikkhave, ekacco anabhijjhālu hoti abyāpannacitto sammādiṭṭhiko. Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, manoceyyaṃ. Imāni kho, bhikkhave, tīṇi soceyyāni.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Horner 1967:12

¹⁶⁶ AN i 271 (3:120); See also AN ii 194 (4:194), AN v 263 (10:176), MN ii 147 (93), MN iii 253 (142) for similar treatments of the topic of purity which make it clear that it is the morality or immorality of one's actions and mental states – rather than physical substances or birth – that make one pure or impure.

Monks, there are three kinds of purity. What are they? They are purity of body, purity of speech, and purity of mind. What, monks, is purity of body? As to that, monks, one refrains from taking life, one refrains from taking what is not given, and one refrains from sexual misconduct. This, monks, is what one can call purity of body.

What, monks, is purity of speech? As to that, monks, one refrains from false speech, one refrains from harsh speech, one refrains from slanderous speech, and one refrains from frivolous speech. This, monks, is what one can call purity of speech.

What, monks, is purity of mind? As to that, monks, one is without covetousness, ill-will, or wrong views. This, monks, is what one can call purity of mind. These, monks, are the three kinds of purity.

This idea of purity – as being a product of one’s moral qualities and actions rather than a product of contact with impure physical substances – was one of the key ways in which early Buddhists sought to distinguish themselves from the pre-existing Brahminical tradition.¹⁶⁷ In the Brahminical tradition, physical contact with bodily substances, particularly in connection with death, renders one impure. As meat is the flesh of a creature which has died, coming into contact with it or consuming it is considered to be polluting under normal circumstances.

The fact that in its view of purity the *Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta* diverges in this way from earlier texts – and on a point where the early Buddhists had striven to distinguish themselves from the Brahminical tradition – indicates that Brahminical ideas of purity exerted a strong influence on its authors. The fact that they felt able to include a clearly Brahminical conception of purity in their text indicates moreover that such ideas of purity and impurity were widespread amongst their intended readership.

It might be pointed out, of course, that Buddhist texts do often refer to the body as being repulsive. Indeed there is a method of meditation whereby the practitioner is specifically instructed to reflect on the disgusting nature of the body.¹⁶⁸ It would, however, be mistaken to interpret this as an indication that the body was considered impure by early Buddhists in

¹⁶⁷ Telwatte 1998:104

¹⁶⁸ e.g. DN ii 290 (22)

the same way as by the Brahminical tradition. These references and meditation techniques pertain to method rather than doctrine. That is to say they are intended to have the effect of weakening sexual desire in the practitioner rather than being an expression of Buddhist doctrine as such.

7.2 Purity and Smell

An issue closely related to that of purity is smell. The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta points out in several places that the smell of meat, and thereby the smell of one who eats meat, is unpleasant:

mṛtaśavadurgandhapratikūlasāmānyādapi mahāmate māṃsam abhakṣyaṃ bodhisattvasya | mṛtasyāpi hi mahāmate manuṣyasya māṃse dahyamāne tadanyaprāṇimāṃse ca na kaścidgandhaviśeṣaḥ samamubhayamāṃsayor dahyamānayoḥ daurgandhyam ato 'pi mahāmate śucikāmasya yoginaḥ sarvaṃ māṃsam abhakṣyaṃ bodhisattvasya ||¹⁶⁹

The stench of a dead body is universally considered to be disagreeable. Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva to eat meat. When flesh is being burned, Mahāmati, whether it is the flesh of a dead person or of another kind of living being, there is no difference in the smell. Both kinds of flesh give off the same stench. Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva whose spiritual practice is to develop a love of purity to eat any kind of meat.

mukhaṃ cāsyā paramadurgandhi iha iva tāvaj janmani ity api kṛtvā mahāmate kṛpātmanaḥ sarvaṃ māṃsam abhakṣyaṃ bodhisattvasya ||¹⁷⁰

Reflecting that his mouth will emit the most terrible stench as long as he lives, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva to eat any kind of meat.

¹⁶⁹ N 248:3–7

¹⁷⁰ N 249:1–3

*anāryajuṣṭa durgandham akīrtikaram eva ca |
kravyādabhojanaṃ māṃsaṃ brūhy abhakṣyaṃ mahāmune || 2 ||¹⁷¹*

2. *'It is pleasing to ignoble people, emits a foul smell, gives one a bad reputation, and is food for carnivorous beasts.*

Therefore, Great Sage, you have proclaimed that it is not appropriate to eat meat.'

There is a link in Indian traditions between foul smell and impurity. The last sentence of the first extract above makes the link between the issues of smell and of purity fairly explicit, even though it does not do so in an entirely direct fashion. Moreover, in other passages in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, the undesirability of consuming meat is linked to the undesirability of consuming strong-smelling vegetables such as garlic, onions, and leeks. As John Kieschnick explains, both meat and garlic and onions were considered to be impure in the Indian Buddhist traditions which were transmitted to China.¹⁷²

*madyaṃ māṃsaṃ palāṇḍuṃ na bhakṣayeyaṃ mahāmune |
bodhisattvair mahāsattvair bhāṣadbhir jinapuṅgavaiḥ || 1 ||¹⁷³*

1. *'Intoxicants, meat, and onions are not to be eaten, Great Sage, by bodhisattvas, great beings or by the radiant, heroic victorious ones.*

*māṃsāni ca palāṇḍuṃś ca madyāni vividhāni ca |
grñjanaṃ laśunaṃ caiva yogī nityaṃ vivarjayet || 5 ||¹⁷⁴*

5. *'The spiritual practitioner should always avoid all kinds of meat, onions, and intoxicants, as well as leeks and garlic.*

In the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, the consumption of onions, leeks, and garlic is mentioned only in passing, and is not explicitly linked to the idea of either impurity or smell. The notion that garlic, onions, and leeks are impure is not an exclusively Buddhist one, but

¹⁷¹ N 256:9–10

¹⁷² Kieschnick 2005:191

¹⁷³ N 256:7–8

¹⁷⁴ N 256:15–16

is also found in the Brahminical tradition, as evidenced by the following verse from the Manusmṛti:

*laśunaṃ gr̥jjanam caiva palāṇḍum kavakāni ca |
abhakṣyāṇi dvijātīnām amedhyaprabhavāni ca || 5.5 ||*

*Garlic, leeks, onions, mushrooms and everything else of impure origin
should not be eaten by the twice-born.*

A prohibition against consuming garlic is found in earlier Buddhist texts, such as this extract from the Pāli Vinaya, where a monk is made to sit apart from his brethren after having consumed garlic.

*Tena kho pana samayena bhagavā mahatiyā parisāya parivuto dhammaṃ
desento nisinno hoti. Aññatarena bhikkhunā lasuṇaṃ khāyitaṃ hoti. So—mā
bhikkhū byābādhiṃsūti—ekamantaṃ nisīdi. Addasā kho bhagavā taṃ
bhikkhuṃ ekamantaṃ nisinnaṃ. Disvāna bhikkhū āmantesi—“kiṃ nu kho so,
bhikkhave, bhikkhu ekamantaṃ nisinno”ti? “Etena, bhante, bhikkhunā lasuṇaṃ
khāyitaṃ. So—mā bhikkhū byābādhiṃsūti—ekamantaṃ nisinno”ti. “Api nu kho,
bhikkhave, taṃ khāditabbaṃ, yaṃ khāditvā evarūpāya dhammakathāya
paribāhiyo assā”ti? “No hetam, bhante”. “Na, bhikkhave, lasuṇaṃ khāditabbaṃ.
Yo khādeyya, āpatti dukkaṭassā”ti.¹⁷⁵*

*At that time the Blessed One was sitting teaching the Dhamma surrounded by a
large assembly. One of the monks had eaten garlic. In order that the other
monks would not be harmed, he sat to one side. The Blessed One saw the
monk who was sitting to one side, and asked the other monks, “Why is that
monk sitting to one side?” “Because, Bhante, he has eaten garlic. He is sitting
to one side in order that the other monks not be harmed.” “Monks, should one
eat anything that will lead one to be excluded from a discourse on the Dhamma
such as this one?” “No Bhante, one should not.” “Monks, garlic should not be
eaten. Anyone who does so commits an offence.”*

¹⁷⁵ Vin ii 139

This text is rather tantalising in that it makes no explicit reference to either purity or smell, but the circumstances of the story it related makes it very tempting to interpret it in this way. The word I translate here as “harmed” is a striking word to use in such a context. *Byābādha* is translated in the PTSD as “wrong”, “hurt”, and even “evil”.¹⁷⁶ Horner renders the term here as “incommoded”,¹⁷⁷ which rather understates the strength of the term. Was the monk who had eaten garlic considered to be impure in some way, such that his presence in the assembly would actually harm the other monks? Or would the fact that he smelled of garlic simply annoy (or “incommoded”) his brethren? All we can be sure of is that his consumption of garlic necessitated him sitting apart, and it is this separation – and the fact that he as a consequence missed out on hearing the Buddha’s discourse on the Dhamma – that is given as the justification for the rule on avoiding garlic, rather any unpleasant odour or impurity in itself.

There is a text called the *Āmagandhasutta* which is found in the *Suttanipāta*, a collection widely considered to contain some of the oldest Buddhist texts still extant, which explicitly rejects the connection between stench and meat. It states:

*Pāṇātipāto vadhachedabandhanaṃ,
Theyyaṃ musāvādo nikaivañcanāni ca;
Ajjhenakuttaṃ paradārasevanā,
Esāmagandho na hi maṃsabhojanaṃ.*¹⁷⁸

*Taking life, violence, cutting, binding,
Stealing, lying, cheating, and deceit;
Studying speculation, adultery,
These things are what stink, not eating meat.*

The text goes on to list a number of other spiritual and moral failings, repeating the line ‘*Esāmagandho na hi maṃsabhojanaṃ*’ a number of times.

¹⁷⁶ PTSD 492

¹⁷⁷ Horner 2014:2173

¹⁷⁸ Snp 42 (2.2)

The Mahīśāsakavinaya, however, does explicitly give both smell and impurity as the reasons for its prohibition of garlic.¹⁷⁹ It tells of laypeople ridiculing monks who had eaten garlic because of the smell they gave off, and says that the monks' quarters smelled like a kitchen. A monk who has eaten garlic is not permitted to listen to the Dharma, and is to live apart from the other monks for seven days. Garlic is described in this passage not only as smelly,¹⁸⁰ but also as impure.¹⁸¹

Whilst the mainstream Buddhist view of purity was certainly, as I.B. Horner describes, and as we have seen in the extracts from the Aṅguttaranikāya and Suttanipāta quoted above, that purity and impurity was a matter of moral qualities rather than physical substances, both the Mahīśāsakavinaya and the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta are evidence that the idea of certain foodstuffs being impure did make its way into Buddhist texts, although such references are relatively uncommon.

7.3 Varṇa

In the Brahminical tradition, the issue of purity is closely related to that of varṇa, or hereditary class, particularly in relation to cāṇḍālas, who are considered to be outside the varṇa system, and contact with whom causes pollution. In the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, meat-eating is associated explicitly with outcaste status:

*tadyathāpi mahāmate ḍombacāṇḍālakaivartādīcchapiśitāśinaḥ sattvān dūrata
eva dṛṣṭvā śvānaḥ prabhayanti bhayena maraṇaprāptāścaike bhavanty
asmānapi mārayiṣyantīti*¹⁸²

For example, Mahāmati, when a dog sees a ḍomba, an outcaste, or a fisherman who desires to eat flesh – even from a distance – he will be gripped by fear and think, “These are accomplished killers. They will kill me too.”

¹⁷⁹ 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 T.1421, vol 22, p176a11ff.

¹⁸⁰ 臭 *chòu*, which can translate Sanskrit *durgandha*, *daurgandhya* etc.

¹⁸¹ 穢 *hui*, which can translate Sanskrit *asuci*, *asubha* etc.

¹⁸² N 246:13–15

The attitude of the early Buddhist tradition towards varṇa is in some ways ambiguous. There are many early Buddhist texts which clearly reject the idea that moral distinctions based on varṇa have any validity.¹⁸³

Buddhists have, however, always had a tendency to approach the social conditions within which they find themselves in a pragmatic and realistic – rather than a revolutionary – manner, and there are also many early Buddhist texts that portray the Buddha and his followers as implicitly accepting the varṇa system in ordinary society (outside the monastic saṅgha). Still, when the text links meat-eating to both impurity and outcaste status, it does start to become more reminiscent of a Brahminical rather than a mainstream Buddhist approach.

¹⁸³ See for example MN ii 147 (93), Dhṃ 107 (383) ff.

8 – Meat-Eating and Other Mahāyāna Texts

In this final chapter we will examine connections between the treatment of meat-eating in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta and that found in other Mahāyāna sūtras. We will also ask why the text makes no mention whatsoever of Devadatta, the villain of the Pāli Tipiṭaka, who is renowned for having proposed compulsory vegetarianism.

8.1 Meat-Eating in Other Mahāyāna Sūtras

The most direct example of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta's intertextuality comes in the following verse, where other Mahāyāna sūtras are referred to by name:

*hastikakṣye mahāmeghe nirvāṇāṅgulimālike |
laṅkāvatārasūtre ca mayā māṃsaṃ vivarjitam || 16 ||¹⁸⁴*

16. 'I have rejected meat-eating in the Hastikakṣya, the Mahāmegha, the Nirvāṇa, the Aṅgulimālika, and the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra.

8.1.1 Hastikakṣya

The Hastikakṣyasūtra is extant only in Tibetan. It contains one brief reference to meat-eating, where it states that a Bodhisattva who is engaged in practising the vidyā of Mañjuśrī for the purposes of purification should not eat meat.¹⁸⁵

8.1.2 Mahāmeghasūtra

There is a text called the Mahāmeghasūtra which is extant in Sanskrit,¹⁸⁶ but this makes no mention of meat-eating. There are several sūtras in the Tibetan Tipiṭaka with the word Mahāmegha in the title. The *Sprin chen po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (whose

¹⁸⁴ N 258:4–5

¹⁸⁵ *Glang po'i rtsal zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* Derge Kanjur vol. tsha, 108b.3–4

¹⁸⁶ Moriguchi 1980

Sanskrit title is given as Āryamahāmeghanāmahāyānasūtra) also refers to meat-eating only in passing. Like the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, it states that the ṛṣis did not eat meat,¹⁸⁷ and it also presents giving up meat as one of a number of changes made by those who have decided to practise Buddhist ethics (*tshul khrims*, Skt. śīla).¹⁸⁸

8.1.3 Nirvāṇasūtra

The Nirvāṇasūtra (often also referred to by its fuller title of Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra) contains a longer discussion of meat-eating, as a dialogue between the Buddha and Mahākāśyapa, and uses many of the same arguments as the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta. It presents the Buddha as teaching that abstaining from meat brings karmic benefit (德 *dé*, Skt. puṇya),¹⁸⁹ and that eating meat destroys the seeds of great loving kindness (大慈種 *dà cí*, Skt. mahāmaitrī).¹⁹⁰ It also addresses the issue of consuming meat that conforms to the threefold purity. Like the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, it states that this was only a provisional teaching which has now been dispensed with.¹⁹¹

It then takes up a problem which the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta does not, namely the fact that meat and fish are included in a list of excellent foodstuffs (美食 *měishí*, Skt. praṇītabhojana) in early Buddhist texts such as the pācittiya rule from the Pāli Vinaya quoted in Chapter 5.¹⁹² It is not the consumption of these foodstuffs in itself that constitutes an offence, it is requesting them specially. Eating these foods when received as alms in the normal fashion is not an offence. Meat and fish were considered to be particularly delicious, high quality sorts of food which there was a danger of developing an attachment to. The Nirvāṇasūtra takes the approach of simply denying flat out that meat and fish were considered to be “excellent foodstuffs” by the Buddha.¹⁹³ The link between meat-eating

¹⁸⁷ *Sprin chen po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* Derge Kanjur vol. wa, 119a.1–2

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.* 123a.6–7; 123b.1

¹⁸⁹ T.374 vol 12 p.386a10–11

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.* p.386a15–16

¹⁹¹ *ibid.* p.386a16–17

¹⁹² Vin iv 87

¹⁹³ T.374 vol 12 p.386a21–22

and desire is made explicit in this passage, with the Buddha stating that when he has even instructed his followers to dye their clothes an unattractive colour, they should certainly not give in to the desire for the taste of meat.¹⁹⁴ (The implication here, presumably, is that the desire for meat is significantly stronger than the desire for attractive clothes.)

Interestingly, the text has Mahākāśyapa asking the Buddha whether this should be taken to imply that one should abstain from all of the excellent foodstuffs. The Buddha rebukes him by saying that this is a Jain view, which he does not share.¹⁹⁵

The Nirvāṇasūtra also uses the argument that eating meat makes one smell bad, and that this smell will cause fear in others¹⁹⁶ because they will be afraid that the meat-eater will kill them in order to consume their flesh.¹⁹⁷ It also compares the effect of eating meat to that of eating garlic.¹⁹⁸

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta presents the idea that bodhisattvas do not even eat ordinary food, but take their nourishment exclusively from the Dharma. The Nirvāṇasūtra puts forward this idea too, but takes the argument a little farther than the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta when it states that bodhisattvas may *appear* to eat meat, even though they do not in fact eat ordinary food at all.¹⁹⁹

The section on meat-eating in the Nirvāṇasūtra concludes with a fairly lengthy tirade against those who the Buddha predicts will distort his teaching in order to claim that he permitted meat-eating, in a fairly similar fashion to the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta.²⁰⁰

In his article *Buddhist Vegetarianism in China*, John Kieschnick identifies the Nirvāṇasūtra and the Laṅkāvatārasūtra as two of the three most texts that had the greatest influence on the widespread adoption of vegetarianism by Chinese Buddhists²⁰¹ (the third

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p.386a24–25

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p.386a26–29

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p.386b02–05

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p.386b09–10

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. p.386b07

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p.386b12

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p.386b14ff.

²⁰¹ Kieschnick 2005:191

being the Brahmājālasūtra).²⁰² They were both translated into Chinese in the early 5th century CE,²⁰³ the Laṅkāvatārasūtra some twenty years after the Nirvāṇasūtra. This, along with the fact that the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta mentions the Nirvāṇasūtra by name suggests that the section on meat-eating in the Nirvāṇasūtra predates the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, and indeed appears to have strongly influenced it.²⁰⁴ The Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta takes up most of the arguments against meat-eating that the earlier text employs, but expands them and adds to them. Buddhist texts have a tendency to expand and be added to as they develop over time, so the textual evidence too would indicate that the Nirvāṇasūtra's section on meat-eating most likely predates that of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra.

8.1.4 Aṅgulimālika

The Tibetan text whose Sanskrit title is Ārya Aṅgulimālīyaṃnāmamahāyānasūtra²⁰⁵ contains a number of arguments against meat-eating that are also found in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta. Like the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, it presents the fact of having lived previous existences as a meat-eating animal as a cause of craving for meat in one's present life²⁰⁶ and goes on to claim that taking life will result in future rebirth as a *rākṣasa*.²⁰⁷ It further states that people in the future will turn away from the Dharma because of their desire to eat meat.²⁰⁸ Again in common with the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta, it uses the idea that we have had a familial relationship with all

²⁰² The Brahmājālasūtra (梵網經 *fàn wǎng jīng* T.1484 vol 24) sets forth the primary and secondary precepts to be followed by a bodhisattva. Abstaining from meat is the third of the secondary precepts (p.1005b10–13) – and indeed abstaining from garlic and related vegetables is the fourth (p. 1005b14–16). It began to circulate in China some decades after the Laṅkāvatāra. It is not extant in any Indian language, and is considered to be of Chinese origin (Buswell 1990:8).

²⁰³ Kieschnick 2005:190

²⁰⁴ It is of course entirely possible that both the Nirvāṇasūtra and the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta drew on earlier texts that are no longer extant.

²⁰⁵ *'Phags pa sor mo'i phreng ba la phan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* Derge Kanjur, vol. tsha, 126r.1-206v.7

²⁰⁶ *ibid.* 153b.03

²⁰⁷ *ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *ibid.* 153b.03–04

living beings in one or another of our previous lives as an argument against eating meat.²⁰⁹
It also presents the Buddha stating that he did not eat meat.²¹⁰

There is a Chinese text with a similar name (T.120 央掘魔羅經 *yāng jué mó luó jīng*, Skt. *Aṅgulimālasūtra*), but this contains only a single passing reference to meat-eating, when it states that the Buddha abstained from meat and fish in his career as a bodhisattva.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ *ibid.* 197a.04–05

²¹⁰ *ibid.* 197a.05–06

²¹¹ T.120 vol 02 p.521b15

9 – Conclusion

We have now looked in detail at the many ways in which the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra is linked to other Buddhist and non-Buddhist Indian texts. Whilst it is of course difficult to claim with any real certainty that the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta is referencing the particular version of a specific text that is still extant today, it does seem clear that it contains a great many references, both direct and indirect, to ideas, concepts, arguments and terminology that is widely attested in other texts. Exploring the text's vertical axis in this way has enabled us to gain a much deeper, richer understanding that would have been possible without taking an intertextual approach.

We have seen too how treating the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta as an ideologeme, and discussing it in its historical and social context – particularly in terms of the relationships between Buddhism and the Brahminical and Jaina traditions – has brought out facets of meaning in the text that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Although the text's authors remain anonymous, and the approach we have taken fits well with Barthes' idea of the death of the author, much of the referencing of other texts in the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta does seem to me to be so calculated and rhetorically effective that it makes more sense to ascribe it to an intentional strategy of intertextuality on the part of the text's authors.

Whilst the polemical, at times aggressive, tone of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta does grate somewhat in a text which claims to be the word of the Buddha, in studying it I have been impressed by the skill in which its authors marshalled their arguments and employed a deep and sophisticated knowledge of existing Buddhist texts to argue their case. Most of all, I have become more convinced than ever that an intertextual approach the study of Buddhist texts, especially Mahāyāna texts, is an absolute necessity if one is to achieve the depth and complexity of analysis that such texts merit.

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Appendix 1 – Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta

Nanjio (ed.) 1923, pp.244–259

अथ खलु महामतिबोधिसत्त्वो महासत्त्वो भगवन्तं
गाथाभिः परिपृच्छ्य पुनरप्यध्येषते स्म । देशयतु मे भ-
गवांस्तथागतो ऽर्हन्सम्यक्संबुद्धो मांसभक्षणे गुणदोषं ये-
नाहं चान्ये च बोधिसत्त्वा महासत्त्वा अनागतप्रत्युत्पन्न-
काले^१ सत्त्वानां क्रव्यादसत्त्वगतिवासनावसितानां मांस-
भोजगृध्राणां रसतृष्णाप्रहाणाय धर्मं देशयाम । यथा च
ते क्रव्यादभोजिनः सत्त्वा विनाद्यं^२ रसतृष्णां धर्मरसाहा-
रकाङ्क्षया सर्वसत्त्वैकपुत्रकप्रेमानुगताः परस्परं महामैत्रीं
प्रतिलभेरन् । प्रतिलभ्य सर्वबोधिसत्त्वभूमिषु कृतयोग्याः
क्षिप्रमनुत्तरां सम्यक्संबोधिमभिसंबुध्येरन् । श्रावकप्रत्ये-
कबुद्धभूम्या वा विश्रम्यानुत्तरां ताथागतीं भूमिमुपसर्पये-
युः । दुर्गख्यातं धर्मैरपि तावद्भगवन्नन्यतीर्थिकैर्लोकायतदृ-
ष्ट्यभिनिविष्टैः सदसत्पक्षोच्छेदशाश्वतवादिभिर्मांसं निवा-
र्यते भक्ष्यमाणं स्वयं च न भक्षते । प्रागेव कृपैकरसे^३ स-
म्यक्संबुद्धे^४ प्रणीते लोकनाथ तव शासने मांसं स्वयं च

^१ काले K. कालि T., but left out in A. C. ^२ विराग्य ? Tib. ^३ ता. च for
सर्व in T. ^४ ग्या A. C. K. ग्याः T. ^५ दू T. ^६ न A. C. K. न T.
^७ यैः K. यैकः T. ^८ द्व K. T. ^९ रसैः A. रसै C. T. रसे K. ^{१०} इ T.

भक्षन्ते भक्ष्यमाणं च न निवार्यते । तत्साधु भगवान्स=
र्वलोकानुकम्पकः सर्वसत्त्वैकपुत्रकंसमदर्शी महाकारुणि=
को ऽनुकम्पामुपादाय मांसभक्षणे गुणदोषान्देशयतु मे^१
यथाहं चान्ये च बोधिसत्त्वास्तथत्वाय सत्त्वैभ्यो धर्म दे=
शयेम । भगवानाह । तेन हि महामते शृणु साधु च सुष्टु
च मनसिकुरु । भाषिष्ये ऽहं ते । साधु भगवन्निति म=
हामतिर्बोधिसत्त्वो महासत्त्वो भगवतः प्रत्यश्रीषीत् ॥

भगवांस्तस्यैतदवोचत् । अपरिमितैर्महामते कारणैर्मांसं
सर्वमभक्ष्यं कृपात्मनो बोधिसत्त्वस्य तेभ्यस्तूपदेशमात्रं व=
क्ष्यामि । इह महामते अनेन दीर्घेणाध्वना संसरतां प्रा=
णिनां नास्त्यसौ कश्चित्सत्त्वः सुलभरूपो यो न माता=
भून्पिता वा भ्राता वा भगिनी वा पुत्रो वा दुहिता वा=
न्यतरान्यतरो^२ वा स्वजनबन्धुबन्धुभूतो वा तस्यान्यजन्मप=
रिवृत्ताश्रयस्य मृगपशुपक्षियोन्यन्तर्भूतस्य बन्धोर्बन्धुभूतस्य
वा सर्वभूतात्मभूतानूपागन्तुकामेन सर्वजन्तुप्राणिभूतसंभूतं
मांसं कथमिव भक्ष्यं स्याद्बुद्धधर्मकामेन^३ बोधिसत्त्वेन म=
हासत्त्वेन । राक्षसस्यापि^४ महामते तथागतानामिमां ध=
र्मसुधर्मतामुपश्रुत्योपगतरक्षभावाः कृपालवा भवन्ति मांस=

^१ क left out in A.

^२ Left out in K. T.

^३ भूत् left out in A. C.

^४ रौ T.

^५ ह T.

^६ तु A. C.

^७ बुद्धधर्मकामेन left out in T.

^८ रक्षस्यपि T.

सभक्षणविनिवृत्ताः किमुत धर्मकामा जनाः । एवं तावन्महामते तेषु तेषु जातिपरिवर्तेषु सर्वसञ्ज्ञाः स्वजनबन्धुभावसंज्ञां सर्वसञ्ज्ञैकपुत्रकसंज्ञाभावनार्थं मांसं सर्वमभक्ष्यं कुपात्मनो बोधिसत्त्वस्याभक्ष्यं मांसम् । व्यभिचारादपि महामते मांसं सर्वमभक्ष्यं चारित्रवतो बोधिसत्त्वस्य । श्वखरोष्ट्राश्वबलीवर्दमानुषमांसादीनि हि महामते लोकस्याभक्ष्याणि मांसानि तानि च महामते वीथ्यन्तरेष्टौरभ्रिका भक्ष्याणीति कृत्वा मूल्यहेतोर्विक्रीयन्ते^१ यतस्ततो ऽपि महामते मांसमभक्ष्यं^२ बोधिसत्त्वस्य ॥

शुक्रशोणितसंभवादपि महामते शुचिकामतामुपादाय बोधिसत्त्वस्य मांसमभक्ष्यम् । उद्वेजनकरत्वादपि महामते भूतानां मैत्रीमिच्छतो योगिनो मांसं सर्वमभक्ष्यं बोधिसत्त्वस्य । तद्यथापि महामते डोम्बचारुडालकैवर्तादीच्छ^३पिंशिताशिनः^४ सञ्चान्दूरत^५ एव दृष्ट्वा श्वानः प्रभयन्ति भयेन मरणप्राप्ताश्चैके भवन्त्यस्मानपि मारयिष्यन्तीति एवमेव महामते ऽन्ये ऽपि खभूजलसंनिश्रितान्सूक्ष्मजन्तवो ये मांसाशिनो दर्शनाद्दूरादेव पटुना प्राणेनाप्राय

^१ संज्ञया or संज्ञासर्वं ?

^२ सर्वम left out in K.

^३ ते A. C. K. ने T.

^४ म left out in K.

^५ श्व K.

^६ ता left out in T.

^७ दी left out in A. C.

^८ इच्छ for इष्ट ?

^९ पि left out in K.

^{१०} पिशिनः K. निनः T.

^{११} न left out in T.

^{१२} व A. C. T. पं K.

^{१३} न्या A. C. K. स्मा T.

^{१४} दृष्ट्वा इ. T.

गन्धं राक्षसस्येव मानुषा द्रुतमुपसर्पयन्ति मरणसंदेहा-
श्रैके भवन्ति । तस्मादपि च महामते उद्वेजनकरत्वान्म-
हामैत्रीविहारिणो योगिनो मांसमभक्ष्यं बोधिसत्त्वस्य ।
अनार्यजनजुष्टं¹ दुर्गन्धमकीर्तिकरत्वादपि महामते आर्यज-
नविवर्जितत्वाच्च मांसमभक्ष्यं बोधिसत्त्वस्य । ऋषिभोज-
नाहारो हि महामते आर्यजनो² न मांसरुधिराहार इ-
त्यतो ऽपि बोधिसत्त्वस्य मांसमभक्ष्यम् ॥

बहुजनचित्तानुरक्षणतयाप्यपवादपरिहारं चेच्छतः³ शा-
सनस्य महामते मांसमभक्ष्यं कृपात्मनो बोधिसत्त्वस्य ।
तद्यथा महामते भवन्ति लोके शासनापवादवक्तारः किं-
चित्तेषां आमरणं कुतो वा ब्राह्मण्यं यन्नामैते⁴ पूर्वर्षिभो-
जनान्यपास्य क्रव्यादा इवामिषाहाराः परिपूर्णकुक्षयः
खभूमिजलसंनिश्रितासूक्ष्मांस्त्रासयन्तो जन्तून्समुत्थासयन्त
इमं⁵ लोकं समन्ततः पर्यटन्निहतमेषां आमरणं⁶ ध्वस्तमेषां
ब्राह्मण्यं⁷ नास्त्येषां धर्मो न विनय इत्यनेकप्रकारप्रतिह-
तचेतसः⁸ शासनमेवापवदन्ति । तस्माद्बहुजनचित्तानुरक्ष-

¹ जुष्टं left out in A. ² आभोजनो K. आर्यजना T. ³ चच्छतः A.
चेच्छतः C. चेच्छुः K. देच्छत T. ⁴ श्रि K. ⁵ च T. ⁶ पूर्ववृ A.
पूर्ववृ C. पूर्ववृ K. T. ⁷ वा for दा in T. ⁸ श्रि A. C. T. मृ K.
⁹ ही K. ह्यं T. ¹⁰ न्तुं T. ¹¹ मां T. ¹² न्ति for त्ति in T.
¹³ एषो T. ¹⁴ एषन् A. C. एषे K. एष T. ¹⁵ रं K. ¹⁶ त left out
in K. ¹⁷ प्र T. ¹⁸ न left out in K.

णतयाप्यपवादपरिहारं चेच्छतः शासनस्य महामते मांसं सर्वमभक्ष्यं कृपात्मनो बोधिसत्त्वस्य ॥

मृतशवंदुर्गन्धप्रतिकूलसामान्यादपि महामते मांसमभक्ष्यं बोधिसत्त्वस्य । मृतस्यापि हि महामते मनुष्यस्य मांसे दह्यमाने तदन्यप्राणिमांसे च न कश्चिद्गन्धविशेषः सममुभयमांसयोर्दह्यमानयोर्दुर्गन्ध्यमतो ऽपि महामते शुचिकामस्य योगिनः सर्वं मांसमभक्ष्यं बोधिसत्त्वस्य ॥

श्मशानिकानां च महामते अरण्यवनप्रस्थान्यमनुष्यावचराणि प्रान्तानि शयनासनान्यध्यावसतां योगिनां योगाचाराणां मैत्रीविहारिणां विद्याधराणां विद्यासाधयितुकामानां विद्यासाधनमोक्षविग्रकरत्वान्महायानसंप्रस्थितानां कुलपुत्राणां कुलदुहितृणां च सर्वयोगसाधनान्तरायकरमित्यपि समनुपश्यतां महामते स्वपरात्महितकामस्य मांसं सर्वमभक्ष्यं बोधिसत्त्वस्य । रूपालम्बनविज्ञानप्रत्ययास्वादजनकत्वादपि सर्वभूतात्मभूतस्य कृपात्मनः सर्वं मांसमभक्ष्यं बोधिसत्त्वस्य । देवता अपि चैनं परिवर्जयन्तीति कृत्वा महामते कृपात्मनः¹² सर्वं मांसमभक्ष्यं

¹ रक्तोपाप्यप A. रक्तयापि अप C. रक्तयाप्यप K. रक्तुयापि अप T.

² याः for तः in T. ³ सर्वं for श्व in T. ⁴ धि T. ⁵ स्या T. ⁶ ना

is added in T. ⁷ म left out in T. ⁸ न्या T. ⁹ प्या left out in T.

¹⁰ ए T. ¹¹ कर left out in T. ¹² महात्मनः A. C.

बोधिसत्त्वस्य । मुखं चास्य परमदुर्गन्धि इहैव तावज्ज=
न्मनि इत्यपि कृत्वा¹ महामते² कृपात्मनः सर्वं मांसमभ=
क्ष्यं बोधिसत्त्वस्य । दुःखं स्वपितिं दुःखं प्रतिबुध्यते ।
पापकांश्च रोमहर्षणांस्वप्नान्यश्यन्ति । शून्यागारंस्थितस्य
चैकाकिनो रहोगतस्य विहरतो ऽस्यामनुष्यास्तेजो³ हरन्ति ।
उत्तस्यन्यपि कदाचित्संभवस्यन्यपि संवासमकस्माच्चापद्य=
न्ते आहारे च मावान्न जानाति नाप्यशितपीतंखादिता=
खादितस्य सम्यग्रसपरिणामपुष्ट्यादि समासादयति क्रि=
मिजन्तुप्रचुरकुष्ठनिदानकोष्ठश्च भवति व्याधिवहुलं⁴ न च
प्रतिकूलसंज्ञां⁵ प्रतिलभते । पुत्रमांसभैषज्यवदाहारं देश=
यंश्चाहं महामते कथमिव नार्यजनसेवितमार्यजनविवर्जित=
मेव⁶मनेकदोषा⁷वहमनेकगुणविवर्जितमनृषिभोजनप्रणीतम=
कल्प्यं मांसहृदि⁸हारं⁹ शिष्येभ्यो ऽनुज्ञाप्यामि ॥

अनुज्ञातवान्पुनरहं महामते सर्वार्यजनसेवितमनार्यज=
नविवर्जितमनेकगुणवाहकमनेकदोषविवर्जितं सर्वपूर्वर्षि=

¹ Left out in K. ² नि T. ³ शां T. ⁴ ति A. C. K. ति T.
⁵ न for गार in A. ⁶ एकाकिनो रहोगत 靜居成道處。 See महाव्युत्पत्तिः
⁷ डख्ढाहारो T. ⁸ पीत left out in K. ⁹ अखादित left out in A. खादितखादित
Tib. ¹⁰ मां T. ¹¹ कुष्ठ 藥。大藥風。 See महाव्युत्पत्तिः ¹² लः A. C. K. लं T.
¹³ ल A. C. लः K. लं T. ¹⁴ हा K. T. ¹⁵ मेव left out in T. ¹⁶ शां T.
¹⁷ हु K. ¹⁸ म is added in A. C. ¹⁹ रां A. C. K. रं T. ²⁰ प्या A. स्या
C. K. T. ²¹ वांस्व for वान्युनर in T. ²² अयं left out in T. ²³ पूर्व in T. only.

प्रणीतं भोजनं यदुत शालियवगोधूममुद्गमाषमसूरादिस=
 पिस्त्रैलमधुफाणितगुडखण्डमत्स्यण्डिकादिषु समुपपद्यमानं
 भोजनं कल्प्यमिति कृत्वा । न च महामते ऽनागते ऽध्व=
 न्येकेषां मोहपुरुषाणां विविधविनयविकल्पवादिनां क्र=
 व्यादकुलवासितावासितानां रंसतृष्णाव्यवसितानामिदं प्र=
 णीतं भोजनं प्रतिभाष्यते । नतु महामते पूर्वजिनकृता=
 धिकाराणामवरोपितकुशलमूलानां श्रद्धानामविकल्पानां
 बहुलानां¹¹ शक्यकुलकुलीनानां कुलपुत्राणां कुलदुहि=
 तृणां कायजीवितभोगानध्यवसितानामरसंगृध्राणामलो=
 लूपानां कृपालूनां सर्वभूतात्मभूततामुपगन्तुकामानां स=
 र्वसत्त्वैकपुत्रकप्रियदर्शनां¹⁵ बोधिसत्त्वानां महासत्त्वानां=
 मिति वदामि¹⁹ ॥

भूतपूर्वं महामते अतीते ऽध्वनि राजाभूत्सिंहसौदासो
 नाम²⁰ । स मांसभोजनाहारान्तिप्रसङ्गेन प्रतिसेवमानो रस-

¹ मुंग K. ² सर्पिं K. ³ फ T. ⁴ त्व T. ⁵ शालि (稗米) यव
 (大麥) गोधूम (小麥) मुद्ग (綠豆) माष (豆) मसूर (小豆) सर्पिं (醃) त्रैल (油)
 मधु (蜜) फाणित (糖?) गुड (黑糖) खण्ड (糖蜜) मत्स्यण्डिका (粗糖) ⁶ ते T.
 न A. C. र K. T. ⁸ Left out in T. Tib. अपि तु ? ⁹ शार्दा A. C.
 शार्दा K. शर्दा T. ¹⁰ त्व T. ¹¹ Left out in A. ¹² कुल left out in T.
¹³ रस left out in A. C. ¹⁴ गृध्राणां A. C. गृध्रानां K. गृध्रानां T. ¹⁵ लु ?
¹⁶ त्व K. ¹⁷ पि T. ¹⁸ दर्शनानां T. ¹⁹ Left out in A. ²⁰ दामः
 A. C. ²¹ रः अति T. ²² प्रति left out in T.

तृष्णाध्यवसानं परमतया मांसानि मानुष्याण्यपि¹ भक्षि-
तवान् । तन्निदानं च मित्रामात्यज्ञातिवन्धुवर्गेणापि² प-
रित्यक्तः प्रागेव पौरजानपदैः स्वराज्यविषयपरित्यागाच्च
महद्यसनमांसादितवान्मांसहेतोः ॥

इन्द्रेणापि च महामते देवाधिपत्यं प्राप्तेन पूर्वाभूत्वा¹⁰
पूर्वजन्ममांसादवासनादोषाच्छ्वेनरूपमास्थाय कपोतवे-
षरूपधारी विश्वकर्मा समभिद्रुतो ऽभूत्तुलायां चात्मान-
मारोपित आसीत् । यस्माद्राजानपराधीभूतानुकम्पकः
शिवी दुःखेन महतालम्भितः । तदेवमनेकजन्मात्यस्तमपि¹⁵
महामते देवेन्द्रभूतस्य शक्रस्यापि सतः स्वपरदोषावहन-
सभूत्प्रागेव तदन्येषाम् ॥

अन्येषां च महामते नरेन्द्रभूतानां सतामश्वेनापहृता-
नामटव्यां पर्यटमानानां¹⁸ सिद्ध्या सह मैथुनं गतवतां जी-
वित्तभयादपत्यानि चोत्पादितवन्तः सिंहसंवासान्वयात्क-

¹ ध्य(?) वसापन T. ² सानुपमान्तामपि T. ³ गीन्यपि T. ⁴ ज T.
⁵ गा left out in T. ⁶ मो A. ⁷ वो for देवा in T. ⁸ सा for प्रा in A. C.
⁹ पूर्वा left out in K. T. ¹⁰ Left out in Tib. ¹¹ भूतभूला A. भूत् भूला
C. K. द्रुतो भूला T. ¹² आसीद्राजा कस्मादनप K. आशीत राजा वा
कस्मादनप T. ¹³ सि A. C. K. पि T. ¹⁴ श T. ¹⁵ न्य is added in
K. T. Very strong horse in Tib. अतिवेगाश्चे ? ¹⁶ नाथ K. ताथ T.
¹⁷ हृतामाट K. ¹⁸ तां T. ¹⁹ ह T. ²⁰ भग A. C. K. गत T.
²¹ ता ? ²² त्व K. ²³ क A. C. K. ल्क T.

स्मात्पदप्रभृतयो नृपपुत्रा पूर्वजन्ममांसाददोषवासनतया मनुष्येन्द्रभूता अपि सन्तो मांसादा अभूवन्^१ । इहैव च महामते जन्मनि सप्तकुटीरके ऽपि ग्रामे^२ प्रचुरमांसलौ= ल्यादतिप्रसङ्गेन निषेवमाना मानुषमांसादा घोरा डाका वा डाकिन्यश्च संजायन्ते^३ । जातिपरिवर्ते च महामते त= थैव मांसरसाध्यवसानतया सिंहव्याघ्रद्वीपिवृकतरक्षुमा= र्जारजम्बुकोलूकादिप्रचुरमांसादयोनिषु प्रचुरतरपिशिता= शना राक्षसादिघोरतरयोनिषु विनिपात्यन्ते । यत्र वि= निपतितानां दुःखेन मानुष्ययोनिरपि समापद्यते प्रागेव निर्वृतिः । इत्येवमादयो महामते मांसाददोषाः प्रागेव निषेवमानां समुपजायन्ते विपर्ययाच्च भूयांसो गुणाः । न च महामते बालपृथग्जना एतांश्चान्यांश्च गुणदोषा= नवबुध्यन्ते । एवमादिगुणदोषदर्शनान्महामते मांसं सर्व= मभक्ष्यं कृपात्मनो बोधिसत्त्वस्येति वदामि ॥

यदि च महामते मांसं न कथं चन^४ के चन भक्ष= येयुर्न तन्निदानं^५ घातेरन् । मूल्यहेतोर्हि महामते प्रायः

^१ पा T. ^२ ना for नत in T. ^३ अभूत् T. ^४ करे T. ^५ ग्राम K. ग्रामके T. ^६ राः चाका C. राः चावा K. रा चाका T. ^७ ते K.

^८ ये T. ^९ व्य K. ^{१०} प T. ^{११} दि T. ^{१२} ध्ये K. प T.

^{१३} सा for प in T. ^{१४} न is added in K. ^{१५} From बुध्य till नान् left out in T.

^{१६} न च K. केन for कथं चन के in T. ^{१७} According to Tib., प्राणिनः

seems to be before घातेरन्

प्राणिनो निरपराधि॑नो वध्यन्ते स्वल्पादन्य॑हेतोः । कष्टं
महामते रसतृष्णायामतिसे॑वतां मांसानि मानुषान्यपि
मानुषैर्भक्षन्ते । किं पुनरितरमृ॑गपक्षिप्राणिसंभूतमांसानि
प्रायो महामते मांसरसतृष्णा॑र्तिरिदं तथा तथा॑ जालय=
न्त्वमाविद्धं॑ मोहपुरुषैर्यच्छाकुनिकौरभ्रककैवर्तादयः खेचर=
भूचरजलचरान्प्राणिनो॑ ऽनपराधि॑नो ऽनेकप्रकारं मूल्य-
हेतोर्विश॑सन्ति । न चैषां॑ महामते किं॑कनीकृतरुक्षचेत=
सां राक्षसानामिव गतं॑ घृणानां कदाचिदपि प्राणिषु प्रा-
णिसंज्ञया घातयतां भक्षयतां न घृणोत्पद्यते ॥

न च महामते ऽकृतकमकारि॑तमसंकल्पितं नाम॑ मांसं
कल्प्यमस्ति यदुपादायानुजानी॑यं श्रावकेभ्यः । भविष्यन्ति
तु पुनर्महामते ऽनागते॑ ऽध्वनि ममैव शासने॑ प्रव्रजित्वा
शाक्यपुत्रीयत्वं प्रतिजानानाः॑ काषायध्वजधारिणो मो-
हपुरुषा मिथ्यावितर्को॑पिहतचेतसो विविधविनयविकल्प-
वादिनः सत्कायदृष्टियुक्ता रसतृष्णा॑र्ध्यवसितास्तां तां मांसं

१ घी K. २ ऽदन्य K. स्वदन्य T. ३ ये T. ४ व्या T. ५ व्यै
६ पक्षि left out in T. ७ गता A. गया C. तथा K. T. ८ जालयतिन्वमाविद्ध
K. ९ यंत्रमविद्धं T. १० कै T. ११ भि K. १२ प्राणिनो left out in T.
१३ तू K. १४ अपि चैषां ? Tib. १५ किनी K. किणी T. किंकरि ?
१६ ते K. १७ संकल्पितं नाम is repeated in A. C. K. १८ ती T. १९ च for
तु पुनर् in T. २० Left out in T. २१ महामते is added in T. २२ जानानाः
A. C. K. जानयानाः T. २३ केपि K. २४ न A. C. र K. T. २५ व्यै K.

सभक्षणहेत्वाभासां ग्रन्थयिष्यन्ति । मम चाभूताभ्याख्या-
नं दातव्यं मन्स्यन्ते तत्तदर्थोत्पत्तिनिदानं कल्पयित्वा व-
क्ष्यन्ति^१ । इयमर्थोत्पत्तिरस्मिन्निदाने भगवता मांसभोज-
नमनुज्ञातं^२ कल्प्यमिति । प्रणीतभोजनेषु चोक्तं स्वयं च
क्विल तथागतेन परिभुक्तमिति । न च महामते कुञ्चि-
त्सूत्रे प्रतिसेवितव्यमित्यनुज्ञातं प्रणीतभोजनेषु वा देशितं
कल्प्यमिति ॥

यदि तु महामते अनुज्ञातुकामता मे^३ स्यात्कल्प्यं वा
मे श्रावकाणां प्रतिसेवितुं स्यान्नाहं मैत्रीविहारिणां^४ यो-
गिनां योगाचाराणां श्मशानिकानां महायानसंप्रस्थि-
तानां कुलपुत्राणां कुलदुहितृणां च सर्वसत्त्वैकपुत्रकसं-
ज्ञाभावनार्थं सर्वमांसभक्षणप्रतिषेधं कुर्यां^५ कृतवांश्च । अ-
स्मिन्महामते धर्मकामानां कुलपुत्राणां कुलदुहितृणां च
सर्वयानसंप्रस्थितानां श्मशानिकानां मैत्रीविहारिणामा-
रख्यकानां योगिनां^६ योगाचाराणां सर्वयोगसाधनाय स-
र्वसत्त्वैकपुत्रकसंज्ञाभावनार्थं सर्वमांसप्रतिषेधम् ॥

^१ समवाय for मम चा in T. ^२ न्या T. ^३ त्य K. ^४ तत्तमो T.
^५ भक्षन्ति T. ^६ त A. C. K. ^७ तं T. ^८ तु K. ^९ प्रवितव्य A. C. K.
प्रतिसेवितव्य T. ^{१०} त्य A. C. K. ^{११} त T. ^{१२} Left out in A. C.
^{१३} च A. C. K. ^{१४} वी T. ^{१५} आरख्यकानां is added in T. ^{१६} क left
out in K. ^{१७} त् is added in T. ^{१८} मा left out in K. ^{१९} Left
out in T.

तत्र तत्र^१ देशनापाठे शिक्षापदानामनुपूर्वीबन्धं निःश्रे-
णीपदविन्यासयोगेन त्रिकोटिं बद्ध्या न तदुद्दिश्य कृतानि
प्रतिषिद्धानि । ततो दशप्रकृतिमृतान्यपि मांसानि प्रति-
षिद्धानि । इह तु सूत्रे^२ सर्वेण^३ सर्वं^४ सर्वथा^५ सर्वं^६ निरुपा-
येन सर्वं^७ प्रतिषिद्धम् । यतो ऽहं महामते मांसभोजनं न
कस्यचिदनुज्ञातवान्नुजानामि नानुज्ञास्यामि । अकल्प्यं
महामते प्रव्रजितानां मांसभोजनमिति वदामि । यदपि
च महामते ममाभ्याख्यानं दातव्यं मन्स्यन्ते तथागतेना-
पिं परिभुक्तमिति । तदन्येषां महामते मोहपुरुषाणां स्व-
कर्मदोषावरणावृतानां दीर्घरात्रमनर्थायां हिताय संवर्तकं
भविष्यति । न हि महामते आर्यश्रावकाः प्राकृतमनु-
प्याहारमाहरन्ति कुत एव^८ मांसरुधिराहारमकल्प्यम् । ध-
र्माहारा हि महामते मम श्रावकाः प्रत्येकबुद्धा बोधिस-
त्वाश्च नामिषाहाराः प्रागेव तथागताः । धर्मकाया हि
महामते तथागता धर्माहारस्थितयो नामिषकाया न स-
र्वामिषाहारस्थितयो वान्तसर्वभवोपकरणतृष्णौषणावास-
नाः सर्वक्लेशदोषवासनापगताः सुविमुक्तचित्तप्रज्ञाः सर्व-

^१ In T. only. ^२ पदानु A. C. पदानाम्यनु K. पदानानु T. ^३ निश्चिणी
A. निश्चिणी C. निःश्रेणी K. निःश्रेणी T. ^४ विन्यासपद A. K. Left out
in C. पद id. in T. ^५ च A. C. K. चे T. ^६ वं K. ^७ वं A. C. K.
वं T. ^८ त्या A. C. K. त्या T. ^९ पि left out in K. ^{१०} छां T. ^{११} य T.
^{१२} तमप्याम A. तमप्या C. K. तमनुष्या T. ^{१३} वं T. ^{१४} रा A. C. र K. रः T.

ज्ञाः सर्वदर्शिनः सर्वसत्त्वैकपुत्रकसमदर्शिनो महाकारु-
णिकाः । सो ऽहं महामते सर्वसत्त्वैकपुत्रकसंज्ञी सं^१ क-
थमिव स्वपुत्रमांसमनुज्ञास्यामि परिभोक्तुं श्रावकेभ्यः
कुत एव स्वयं परिभोक्तुम् । अनुज्ञातवानस्मिञ्श्रावके-
भ्यः स्वयं वा परिभुक्तवानिति महामते^२ नेदं स्थानं वि-
द्यते ॥ तत्रैदमुच्यते ॥

मद्यं मांसं पलाण्डुं^३ न भक्षयेयं महामुने^४ ।

बोधिसत्त्वैर्महासत्त्वैर्भाषद्भिर्जिनपुङ्गवैः ॥१॥

अनार्यजुष्टं दुर्गन्धमकीर्तिकरमेव च ।

क्रव्यादभोजनं मांसं ब्रह्मभक्ष्यं महामुने^५ ॥२॥

भक्ष्यमाणे च ये दोषा अभक्ष्ये तु गुणाश्च^६ ये ।

महामते निबोध त्वं ये दोषा मांसभक्षणे ॥३॥

स्वाजन्याद्भ्रमिचाराच्च शुक्रशोणितसंभवात् ।

उद्वेजनीयं^७ भूतानां योगी मांसं विवर्जयेत् ॥४॥

मांसानि च पलाण्डुं^८ मद्यानि विविधानि च ।

गृह्णन् लशुनं चैव योगी नित्यं विवर्जयेत् ॥५॥

स्रष्टाणं वर्जयेत्तैलं शल्यविद्धेषु न स्वपेत् ।

^१ सं=सन्

^२ स्मि आ A. C. K. स्मिन् आ T.

^३ In T. only.

^४ पलाण्डुं T.

^५ महामते A. C. K. मुने T.

^६ दु K.

^७ हि K.

^८ मुने A. C. T. मुखे K.

^९ च R. T.

^{१०} स्तु A. स्तु C. K. थ T.

^{११} य T.

^{१२} दुंश्च A. C. K. एतुच T.

छिद्राच्छिद्रेषु सत्त्वानां यच्च स्थानं महद्भयम्^१ ॥६॥
 आहाराज्जायते दर्पः संकल्पो दर्पसंभवः ।
 संकल्पजनितो रागस्तस्मादपि न भक्षयेत् ॥७॥
 संकल्पाज्जायते रागश्चित्तं रागेण मुह्यते ।
 मूढस्य सङ्गतिर्भवति जायते न च मुच्यते ॥८॥
 लाभार्थं हन्यते सत्त्वो मांसार्थं दीयते धनम् ।
 उभौ तौ पापकर्माणौ पच्येते रौरवादिषु ॥९॥
 यो ऽतिक्रम्य मुनेर्वाक्यं मांसं भक्षति दुर्मतिः ।
 लोकद्वयविनाशार्थं दीक्षितः शक्यशसने ॥१०॥
 ते यान्ति^{११} परमं घोरं^{१२} नरकं पापकर्मिणः ।
 रौरवादिषु रौद्रेषु पच्यन्ते मांसखादकाः ॥११॥
 त्रिंकोटिशुद्धमांसं वै अकल्पितमयाचितम् ।
 अचोदितं च नैवास्ति तस्मान्मांसं न भक्षयेत्^{१३} ॥१२॥
 मांसं न भक्षयेद्योगी मया बुद्धैश्च गर्हितम् ।
 अन्योन्यभक्षणाः सत्त्वाः क्रव्यादकुलसंभवाः ॥१३॥
 दुर्गन्धिकुत्सनीयश्च^{१४} उन्मत्तश्चापि जायते ।

^१ नि T. ^२ येन K. This quarter does not agree with the Tib. version.
^३ द्रव्य T. ^४ क्ष T. ^५ गः चि in all MSS. ^६ वै च without न in T.
^७ धै घात्व T. ^८ णो T. ^९ वाच्यं T. ^{१०} क्षत T. ^{११} तेषां ते T.
^{१२} नं A. C. ^{१३} शाः K. ^{१४} तु A. C. K. चि T. ^{१५} इं A. C. K. इ T.
^{१६} From त् till येद् left out in K. ^{१७} ताः T. ^{१८} क्षनाः A. C. K. क्षणाः T.
^{१९} त्वा A. C. स्वाः K. T. ^{२०} न्यः T. ^{२१} याश्च A. C. यश्च K. यश्च T.

चण्डालपुङ्गसकुले डोम्बेषु च पुनः पुनः ॥१४॥
 डाकिनीजातियोन्याश्च मांसादे^१ जायते कुले ।
 राक्षसीमार्जारयोनी च जायते ऽसौ नरो ऽधमः ॥१५॥
 हस्तिकर्षे महामेघे निर्वाणाङ्गुलिमालिके ।
 लङ्कावतारसूत्रे च मया मांसं विवर्जितम् ॥१६॥
 बुद्धैश्च बोधिसत्त्वैश्च श्रावकैश्च विगर्हितम्^७ ।
 खादते यदि नैर्लज्ज्यादुन्मत्तो^८ जायते सदा ॥१७॥
 ब्राह्मणेषु च जायेतं अथ वा योगिनां कुले ।
 प्रज्ञावान्धनवांश्चैव मांसाद्यानां^९ विवर्जनात् ॥१८॥
 दृष्टश्रुतविशङ्काभिः सर्वमांसं विवर्जयेत् ।
 तार्किका नाव^{१०}बुध्यन्ते क्रव्यादकुलसंभवाः ॥१९॥
 यथैव रागो मोक्षस्य अन्तरायकरो भवेत् ।
 तथैव मांसमद्याद्या अन्तरायकरो भवेत् ॥२०॥
 वक्ष्यन्त्येनागते काले मांसादा मोहवादिनः ।
 कल्पिकं^{११} निरवद्यं च मांसं बुद्धानुवर्णितम् ॥२१॥
 भैषज्यं मांसमाहारं पुत्रमांसोपमं पुनः ।

^१ चा T. ^२ सदो A. C. सादो K. सादे T. Tib. ^३ रक्षो A. C.
 रक्षा K. राक्षसे T. ^४ मः K. ^५ कच्छे A. C. कक्षे K. T. but कक्ष्य
 (象腋經) ^६ निर्माणा A. C. निर्मा K. निर्वाणे ऋ T. ^७ विवर्जितं T.
^८ जदुन्मंतो K. नैलज्ज्यादुन्मत्तो T. ^९ यते T. ^{१०} मान्श्यादि T.
^{११} नानु K. नान्त T. ^{१२} कराञ्ज A. करा भ C. करो भ K. T. ^{१३} वक्ष्य
 C. वक्ष्यंत T. ^{१४} त T. ^{१५} न्यवदाहा A. C. K. न्यं मांसमाहा T.

मात्रया प्रतिकूलं च योगी पिण्डं समाचरेत् ॥२२॥

मैत्रीविहारिणां नित्यं सर्वथा^१ गर्हितं^२ मया ।

सिंहव्याघ्रवृकाद्यैश्च सह एकत्र संभवेत्^३ ॥२३॥

तस्मान्न भक्षयेन्मांसमुद्धेजनकरं नृणाम् ।

मोक्षधर्मविरुद्धत्वादर्याणामेष वै ध्वजः^४ ॥२४॥

इति^५ लङ्कावतारात्सर्वबुद्धप्रवचनहृदयान्मांसभक्षणपरि-
वर्तो ऽष्टमः ॥

^१ पिण्ड समो T.

^२ शा A. C. K. शां T.

^३ सर्वताया T.

^४ गत T.

^५ मृगा in all MSS., but T. T.D.

^६ सवसेत् T.

^७ नि T.

^८ जं K.

^९ धार्य for इति in T.

^{१०} यो K.

Appendix 2 – The Chapter on Meat-Eating

A Translation of the Māṃsabhakṣaṇaparivarta

The Chapter on Meat-Eating

The Eighth Chapter of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra

Then, when the bodhisattva, the great being Mahāmati had questioned the Blessed One in verse, he again requested instruction from him: ‘Blessed One, Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Awakened Buddha, teach me about the virtues and the faults that are associated with meat-eating. Then I and other bodhisattvas, great beings, will teach the Dharma now and in the future in order that living beings who are under the influence of the habitual energy of previous existences as beings who ate flesh and who are greedy for the pleasure that they get from meat, might rid themselves of their craving for its taste. Those living beings who enjoy eating flesh will abandon their craving for its taste, long for the taste of the food of the Dharma, and attain great love for each other, regarding all living beings with the same kind of affection as for their only child. Having attained this great love and practiced all of the stages of the bodhisattva path, they will quickly awaken to unsurpassed, perfect awakening or, having rested a while at the stage of a disciple or solitary buddha, they will approach the unsurpassed stage of a tathāgata. Blessed One, even non-Buddhists who proclaim a false Dharma, who are devoted to materialist doctrines, who put forth the positions of existence or non-existence, or who teach annihilationism or eternalism prohibit meat-eating and do not eat it themselves. Certainly then the Perfectly Awakened Buddha, the Lord of the World who has taught the one taste of compassion should do the same. Yet in your teaching you yourself eat meat, and do not prohibit meat-eating. It would be good if the Blessed One, who is filled with empathy for the whole world and who regards all living beings as being like his only child, the Greatly Compassionate One were, out of empathy, to teach me about the virtues and the faults that are associated with meat-eating. Then I and other bodhisattvas will be able to teach the Dharma to living beings like these.’

The Blessed One said, ‘Then, Mahāmati, listen well. Listen carefully and allow you mind to become absorbed by my words, and I will tell you.’

‘Excellent, Blessed One’, said the bodhisattva, the great being Mahāmati, and listened to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, ‘There are countless reasons, Mahāmati, why it is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva to eat any kind of meat. I will explain them to you. In this world, Mahāmati, in the long course of saṃsāra, there is no living being who has obtained a physical form who has not been your mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter, or had some other kind of family relationship to you. These beings are reborn in another state of existence, born from a womb as a wild animal, as livestock, or as a bird, or they are born as someone with whom you have a family relationship. How, then, can it be appropriate for a bodhisattva, a great being, to eat the meat of any kind of being, creature, or living thing whatsoever, when he wants to relate to all living beings as if they were part of himself, and wants to practise the Buddha-Dharma? Mahāmati, even rākṣasas become protectors, develop compassion, and give up eating meat when they hear the excellent nature of the Dharma of the tathāgatas. Certainly then, people who yearn for the Dharma will do the same. Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for any living beings anywhere in the cycle of rebirths who have any notion of family relationships to eat any kind of meat. This is so that they might cultivate a perception of all living beings as being like their only child. It is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva to eat any kind of meat. Even in exceptional circumstances, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva who is engaged in spiritual practice to eat any kind of meat. Meat from dogs, asses, buffalo, horses, oxen, human beings, and so forth are kinds of meat that are not eaten by ordinary people, but they are sold as suitable to eat by shepherds at the side of the road in order to make money. Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva to eat meat from anywhere at all.

‘It is not appropriate, Mahāmati, for a bodhisattva who loves purity to eat meat that comes from the union of semen and blood. It is not appropriate, Mahāmati, for a bodhisattva whose spiritual practice is to strive to develop love to eat meat, as this will cause living beings to shake in fear. For example, Mahāmati, when a dog sees a ḍomba, an outcaste, or a fisherman who desires to eat flesh – even from a distance – he will be gripped by fear and think, “These are accomplished killers. They will kill me too.” In the same way, Mahāmati, when other minute creatures of the air, the earth, or the water see a meat-eater – even from a distance – will, with their keen sense of smell, detect the scent of the rākṣasa, and quickly flee from such people, who may bring death. Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva whose spiritual practice is to dwell with great love to eat meat, because this will cause living beings to shake in fear. It is not appropriate, Mahāmati, for a bodhisattva to eat meat – which stinks and which is pleasing to ignoble

people – because eating meat gives one a bad reputation, and because noble people abstain from it. Noble people, Mahāmati, do not offer bloody meat when they make offerings of food to the sages, and so it is certainly not appropriate for a bodhisattva to eat meat.

‘In order to protect the minds of a great many people, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva who wants to avoid the Buddha’s teaching being spoken ill of to eat meat. For example, Mahāmati, there are people in this world who speak ill of the Buddha’s teaching, saying “Why do these people who are supposedly living the life of a renunciant or a brahmin reject the food of the sages of old, and eat flesh like carnivorous animals with full bellies, terrifying minute creatures of the air, the earth, and the water, bringing terror to all about them as they wander through this world? These people destroy the renunciant life, they obliterate the brahmin life. There is neither Dharma nor discipline in them.” There are many kinds of people with a hostile attitude who speak ill of the Buddha’s teaching in this way. Therefore, Mahāmati, in order to protect the minds of a great many people, it is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva who wants to avoid the Buddha’s teaching being spoken ill of to eat any kind of meat.

‘The stench of a dead body is universally considered to be disgusting. Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva to eat meat. When flesh is being burned, Mahāmati, whether it is the flesh of a dead person or of another kind of living being, there is no difference in the smell. Both kinds of flesh give off the same stench. Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva whose spiritual practice is to develop a love of purity to eat any kind of meat.

‘When sons and daughters of good family, Mahāmati, who have committed themselves to the Mahāyāna, spiritual practitioners engaged in spiritual practice, who dwell with love, who know incantations and wish to perform them, go forth to cremation grounds, to the forest wilderness, to far-off places, to places inhabited by demons, to a hut or some other place to meditate, they are hindered in accomplishing incantations and in attaining liberation. Thus, Mahāmati, seeing that it creates obstacles to all kinds of spiritual practice and accomplishment, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva who desires to bring benefit to themselves and others to eat any kind of meat. Because perceiving physical forms brings about the desire to taste them, it is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva who regards all beings as himself to eat any kind of meat. Reflecting that even the gods shun it,

Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva to eat any kind of meat. Reflecting that his mouth will emit the most terrible stench as long as he lives, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva to eat any kind of meat.

‘He²¹² sleeps uneasily, and he uneasy when he awakes. He has terrifying, hair-raising dreams filled with evil. Alone in an empty house, his dwelling is lonely, and demons seize his spirit. He may be struck by terror and begin to tremble at any time, for no reason. He does not know how much to eat. When he eats and drinks, he neither tastes properly, digests properly, nor feels properly satisfied. His intestines are filled with a great many worms and things which cause leprosy. He no longer even minds suffering frequently from disease. When I have taught my disciples to regard food as if it were the flesh of their own child, or as medicine, how can I approve of bloody meat as food for my disciples – meat which ignoble people serve and noble people abstain from, which is the cause of so many faults such as those I have described and removes so many virtues, which was not offered as food to the sages, and which is improper?

‘The food I approve of, Mahāmati, is that which all noble people serve and ignoble people abstain from, that which brings about many virtues and removes many faults, that which was offered as food to all the sages of old – that is to say: food prepared with rice, barley, wheat, black lentils, mung beans, lentils and so forth; ghee, oil, honey, treacle, molasses, sugar, sugar-cane juice and so forth; this is proper food. In the future, Mahāmati, certain deluded people following a variety of different kinds of discipline and teaching distorted views, under the influence of the habitual energy of previous existences as beings who ate flesh and entrenched in their desire for the taste of it, may not like this kind of food when it is offered to them. I say to you, Mahāmati, that such people have not served the victorious ones of the past and planted a great many roots of virtue. They do not possess faith, and are not free of distorted views. They are not sons or daughters of good family, and nor do they belong to the family of the Buddha. They are not free of attachment to body, life, or pleasure. They are not free of greedy desire for the taste of meat. They are not free of ardent craving. They are not compassionate. They have no desire to relate to all living beings as if they were part of themselves. They do not look upon all living beings with affection, as if each were their only child. They are not bodhisattvas. They are not great beings.

²¹² i.e. the meat-eater

‘In the past, Mahāmati, in ancient times, there was a king by the name of Siṃhasaudāsa. Because of his overpowering attachment to eating meat and his extreme craving and fixated desire for its taste, he indulged himself to the extent that he even ate human flesh. As a result of this he was shunned by his friends, ministers, family, relations, and associates, as well as the people of the towns and the country. He had to give up his crown and his kingdom, and suffer great misfortune because of meat.

‘Even Indra, Mahāmati, who attained sovereignty over the gods, once had to take on the form of a hawk because of the habitual energy of a previous existence as a meat-eater. He attacked Viśvakarmā, who bore the form of a dove, and who placed himself in the balance. King Śibi felt empathy for the innocent dove, because of the great suffering it was being made to endure. If even Śakra, Mahāmati, who after many existences attained lordship over the gods, could bring affliction upon himself and others in this way, then certainly others can.

‘There was another king, Mahāmati, a lord of men whose horse carried him off into the forest. Wandering about, he had sex with with a lioness out of fear for his life. Because of their ancestry, the offspring they produced had spotted²¹³ feet. Because of the evil habitual energy of previous existences as meat-eaters, the king’s children were meat-eaters, even after ascending to the throne. In this life, Mahāmati, they lived in a village with seven huts, and because of their overpowering attachment and devotion to their greed for great quantities of meat, they gave birth to terrible ḍākas and ḍākinīs who ate human flesh. In the cycle of birth, Mahāmati, being fixated on the taste of meat leads people to end up in the wombs of lions, tigers, leopards, wolves, hyenas, wildcats, jackals, and many other kinds of carnivorous animals. They will even fall into the wombs of the terrible rākṣasas, who are even more intent on eating flesh. For those who have fallen into such states of existence, it is difficult to attain birth as a human being, not to speak of Nirvāṇa. These, Mahāmati, are some of the faults associated with meat-eating, not to speak of the qualities which arise out of the distorted views of those who are devoted to eating meat. Ordinary immature people, Mahāmati, are not aware of these and other virtues and faults. It is in view of these and other virtues and faults, Mahāmati, that I say it is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva to eat any kind of meat.

²¹³ There is a play on words here, in that the word *kalmāṣa* (“spotted”) is very similar to the word *kalmaṣa*, meaning moral stain or impurity.

'If no-one ate any kind of meat, Mahāmati, then there would be no killing in order to produce it. Innocent living beings, Mahāmati, are generally slain for profit and rarely for any other reason. The overpowering addiction to the taste of meat is so pernicious, Mahāmati, that people not only eat the flesh of living beings such as wild animals and birds, but even human flesh. Often, Mahāmati, deluded people who are afflicted by the desire for the taste of meat set up all kinds of nets and traps. Bird-catchers, shepherds, fishermen and so forth bring death to all kinds of innocent living beings of the air, the earth, and the water in order to make money. There are also those who have become like rākṣasas, Mahāmati, their minds hard and unfeeling, who no longer have any sense of disgust. They see living beings as something to be killed and eaten, and no sense of disgust arises in them.

'Moreover, Mahāmati, it is not the case that meat is proper food and approved for my disciples when they have neither killed it themselves, nor had someone else kill it, nor intended for it to be killed for them. However, Mahāmati, in the future there will be deluded people who have gone forth into the homeless life under the auspices of my teaching, and who claim to be sons of the Śākya, and who bear the banner of the yellow robe, but whose minds have been misled by false ideas, who follow a variety of different kinds of discipline and teach distorted views, who are burdened by belief in a real self, and who are fixated on their desire for the taste of meat. These people will tie themselves in rhetorical knots in order to defend meat-eating. They will think that false accusations of an unprecedented nature should be made against me, and on the basis of their erroneous thinking they will speak in order to achieve their ends. In order to achieve these ends they will say that the Blessed One has given his approval to meat as being proper food. They will say that even the Tathāgata ate it. However, Mahāmati, nowhere in any sūtra is it taught that meat should be served, that it is approved as an offering, or that it is proper food.

'If I wanted to give my approval, Mahāmati, if I considered it to be proper food to serve to my disciples, I would not prohibit all kinds of meat as appropriate to eat for sons and daughters of good family who dwell with love, spiritual practitioners engaged in spiritual practice, who go forth to cremation grounds, who have committed themselves to the Mahāyāna – and I have prohibited it, so that they might cultivate a perception of all living beings as being like their only child. I have prohibited any kind of meat for sons and daughters of good family who long for the Dharma, who have committed themselves to

any of the yānas, who go forth to cremation grounds or to the forest wilderness, who dwell with love, spiritual practitioners engaged in spiritual practice, no matter what their spiritual practice or accomplishment is, so that they might cultivate a perception of all living beings as being like their only child.

‘In certain places in the scriptures, precepts are arranged in successive order, linked to each other systematically like the steps of a ladder. Thus, with the rule of threefold purity having been laid down, meat which has not been killed specifically for one is not prohibited. That is the reason for the prohibition on ten kinds of meat. In this sūtra, however, any meat-eating of any kind, in any circumstances, by any means is prohibited. Therefore, Mahāmati, I have not approved of, do not approve of, and will not approve of anyone eating meat. I say, Mahāmati, that meat is not proper food for someone who has gone forth into the homeless life. Some, Mahāmati, will think that false accusations should be made against me, and they will say that even the Tathāgata ate meat. These and other deluded people Mahāmati, will be obstructed by the faults they have created by their own actions, and will spend a long time in states of existence which will have no meaning or benefit for them. My noble disciples, Mahāmati, do not even eat the food of ordinary people, and certainly not bloody meat, which is improper. My disciples, Mahāmati, as well as solitary buddhas and bodhisattvas – and so certainly the tathāgatas – eat the food of the Dharma, not food made of flesh. The tathāgatas, Mahāmati, have Dharma-bodies and they nourish themselves with the food of the Dharma. They do not have bodies of flesh and they do not nourish themselves with any kind of food made of flesh. They have expelled the habitual energy of the longing and the desire which maintain all states of existence. They have rid themselves of the habitual energy of all faults and defilements. They have the wisdom of completely liberated minds. They are all-knowing, all-seeing, and greatly compassionate, regarding all living beings as being like their only child. When I perceive all living beings as being like my only child, Mahāmati, how could I approve of my disciples eating the flesh of my own children, and how could I eat it myself? Mahāmati, there is no basis for the claim that I have approved of my disciples eating meat, or eaten it myself.’

The following words were then spoken:

1. ‘Intoxicants, meat, and onions are not to be eaten, Great Sage, by bodhisattvas, great beings or by the radiant, heroic victorious ones.

2. 'It is pleasing to ignoble people, emits a foul smell, gives one a bad reputation, and is food for carnivorous beasts.

Therefore, Great Sage, you have proclaimed that it is not appropriate to eat meat.'²¹⁴

3. 'Eating meat brings faults. Abstaining from it brings virtues.

You should understand, Mahāmati, the faults associated with eating meat.

4. 'Because it represents a failure to honour one's family connections, because it is produced from the union of semen and blood, because it causes living beings to shrink from one in fear, the spiritual practitioner should avoid meat.

5. 'The spiritual practitioner should always avoid all kinds of meat, onions, and intoxicants, as well as leeks and garlic.

6. 'He should avoid rubbing the body with oil and sleeping on a bed of nails. When he is pierced, the living beings in the openings will be greatly afraid.

7. 'Eating meat leads to arrogance, and arrogance brings about distorted perceptions. Distorted perceptions lead to greed, and so one should not eat meat.

8. 'Distorted perceptions lead to greed, and a mind filled with greed is deluded by it. Being afflicted by delusions leads to birth, not to liberation.

9. 'Living beings are killed for the sake of profit, and money is paid in exchange for meat. Both of these evil acts bear fruit in the fires of hells such as Raurava.

10. 'In terms of the Śākyan's teaching, evil-minded people who ignore the teachings of the Sage by eating meat have dedicated themselves to the destruction of the two worlds.

11. 'These who perform such evil actions go to the most terrible of the hells. In fierce hells such as Raurava the actions of those who devour meat bear fruit.

²¹⁴ The first two verses appear to be addressed by Mahāmati to the Buddha, with the text then switching to the Buddha addressing Mahāmati from verse 3. Suzuki has the Buddha speaking the first two verses, but has to read *mahāmate* for *mahāmune* in both verse 1 and verse 2, and *brūmi* ("I proclaim") for *brūhi* ("you proclaim") in verse 2 in order to make this interpretation work (Suzuki 1932/1999:219–220). Assuming the the speaker shifts from Mahāmati to the Buddha between verses 2 and 3 seems to make more sense.

12. 'Meat which is pure in three respects – not prepared, not requested, not invited – does not exist. Therefore, meat should not be eaten.
13. 'A spiritual practitioner should not eat meat.
This is condemned by the buddhas, and by me.
Living beings who eat one another are reborn as carnivorous animals.
14. 'One who eats meat smells foul, and is held in contempt.
He will be born with an impaired intellect in a family of outcastes, Pukkakas or Ḍombas.
15. 'He will be born from the womb of a ḍākinī, into a family of meat-eaters.
This lowest of men will be born in the womb of a rākṣasī or a cat.
16. 'I have rejected meat-eating in the Hastikakṣya, the Mahāmegha, the Nirvāṇa, the Aṅgulimālika, and the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra.
17. 'It is repudiated by buddhas, bodhisattvas, and disciples.
If one is so shameless as to eat meat, one will always be born with an impaired intellect.
18. 'One who abstains from eating meat and so forth will thereby be born in a family of brahmins or spiritual practitioners, with wisdom and wealth.
19. 'Because one sees, hears, and suspects, one should abstain from all kinds of meat.
Sophists born into carnivorous families do not realise this.
20. 'Just as greed is a hindrance to liberation, so too meat, intoxicants and so forth are hindrances to liberation.
21. 'In the future, deluded people may teach that meat-eating is proper, blameless, and extolled by the buddhas.
22. 'Meat should be regarded as being like medicine, or the flesh of one's own child.
A spiritual practitioner should be averse to it when collecting alms, even in small quantities.
23. 'For those who dwell with love, I have condemned any kind of meat-eating for all time.
Those who eat meat will be born alongside lions, tigers, wolves, and so forth.

24. 'Therefore, it is not appropriate to eat meat, which causes people to shake in fear, and is an obstacle to the Dharma, which leads to liberation. Abstention from meat is the banner of the noble ones.'

This is the Chapter on Meat-Eating, the Eighth Chapter of the Laṅkāvarāra, which is the Heart of the Teachings of All the Buddhas.