Origins 4: On Truth

Patrick Kearney · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Patrick Kearney · 46:30

Yesterday we finished off the Dhammacakkappavattanasutta, setting in motion the wheel of the Dharma, and we had a look at the teaching of the four truths that constitutes the basic framework of the Buddha's teaching.

Tonight we're going to do a bit of a sidestep and look at truth in general—how the Buddha understood truth and what exactly it is. We're going to do this via the Caṅkīsutta, which is Majjhima Nikāya number 95. Here we have a discussion on the nature of truth.

The heart of the discourse is a discussion between the Buddha and a very talented sixteen-year-old Brahmin student. Brahmin in English, Brāhmaṇa in Pali and Sanskrit. His name is Kāpaṭika. He's a junior member of a group made up of a number of senior Brāhmaṇas from the village of Opasāda in the kingdom of Kosala. The Buddha's wandering around, he comes to this village, and the senior Brahmins have come to check out the Buddha. If you imagine the scene, the Buddha's in the front, the most senior Brahmins are close by, and the crowd goes back, with the more junior ones at the back. So Kāpaṭika is at the back.

They begin to have a discussion, and then Kāpaṭika interrupts the discussion between the Buddha and the elders. The Buddha rebukes him for interrupting. But the leader of the Brahmins, Caṅkī, after whom the discourse is named, intervenes and says that Kāpaṭika is worthy of joining this discussion, despite his youth, because he's extremely talented. If he's got something to say, it'll be worth listening to.

The subtext reflects that this whole scene, this whole interruption, and Caṅkī's response, is actually pre-planned—the Brahmins want Kāpaṭika up on stage, having it out with the Buddha. So the Buddha decides to play along.

Again, the context: this is a Brahmin village, and from the description it sounds like it's a centre for study. The Brahmins were, part of their function, scholars. Therefore the Buddha is actually in enemy territory, and he would know this very well. The Brahmins were the most stubborn opponents of the Buddha and his teaching. One of the reasons they couldn't accept him was because of opposing views on the class structure of India at the time.

In the Ganges Valley, there were four recognized classes. In Sanskrit, these are called the varṇa. So you have Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra—these are the four.

The Brāhmaṇas, or in English the Brahmins, are the Vedic scholars. They're priests. They offer the sacrifice, and they are teachers. This is what they specialise in, although they spun off and did other things

as well. Then you have the Kṣatriya—these are the rulers, administrators, warriors. Next are the Vaiśya, the merchants or farmers. And finally the Śūdra—artisans, labourers, servants.

First of all, notice that this is a class system. It's not a caste system. Sometimes you hear people say, "Oh, the Buddha opposed the caste system." The Buddha never heard of the caste system. Caste is a Portuguese word that translates the Sanskrit word jāti, and this system developed long after the Buddha's time. Here we're talking about a simple fourfold class division. Although there was not much social mobility, people could move up and down, depending on circumstances.

The listed order—Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Śūdra—is the standard way you see it listed: first the Brahmins, then the Kṣatriyas. The Buddha had no argument with the class structure. He accepted it. What he disagreed with was, first of all, the question of who was on top. The Brahmins thought the Brahmins were on top. The Kṣatriyas thought the Kṣatriyas were on top. This position at the top was still being contested, and it took some time before the Brahmins won.

And of course, what class was the Buddha? Kshatriya. No surprise.

So eventually the Brahmins won the war of prestige, but it was still a matter for debate in the Buddha's time. The other part of the conflict, and this was the much deeper part, was the fact that the Buddha denied the sacred status of Varna, of the class system.

Now the Brahmins were the top religious people. They were taught, because they were very closely allied to the kings and the rulers, that they were on top of the class system because the gods put them there. So to oppose this system was not just to be bolshie, but it was also to be sacrilegious. It was an offence against the religious order.

The Buddha would not go along with this. He insisted that first of all, all social structures are the creations of human decisions, and so they could be otherwise. There's always an alternative. In other words, people can change what they see as an unsatisfactory social structure.

When you think about it, this is really radical. When economic neoliberalism swept the world in the 1980s, the great slogan of the evangelicals who imposed this system was TINA: There Is No Alternative. And any social structure where someone makes that claim, the Buddha would, I think, shake his head and say, of course there's an alternative. There's always an alternative.

Secondly, he had fundamental disagreements on ethics. The Brahmins taught that ethical demands—how we should live—are relative to one's social status. If you think about the Bhagavad Gita, very famous, at the centre of it is Arjuna, who is Kshatriya, and his relationship with Krishna, who is God incarnate. Arjuna is about to embark on a major battle in which he's about to slaughter large numbers of people, and Krishna is his charioteer. But Arjuna has a crisis of conscience. He says, "I can't do this. This is appalling. Not only am I going to kill a lot of people, but many on the other side are my relatives, my teachers." And Krishna persuades him to put aside these scruples, go out there and kill—because Arjuna is a Kshatriya. It

is his dharma, his duty, to fight and to kill. That's the ethical thing to do.

The Buddha had a very different view about ethics. He thought that the ethical imperatives were exactly the same, regardless of which class you belong to. In one discourse—I didn't actually have time to track it down—a general comes to see the Buddha and asks, "I've been taught by my teacher that soldiers, warriors who die in battle go to a particular heaven reserved for warriors. Is this true?"

The Buddha doesn't answer, which means he's very reluctant. He does not want to respond. He does not want to get involved. But the general persists and asks a second time. For the second time, the Buddha is silent. The general asks a third time, and the Buddha has to respond. The number three, again, is quite significant—three refuges, three times we chant the Vandana, and so on.

So the Buddha says, "Okay, I'll answer." He says the most likely rebirth for anyone who dies in battle is hell or the animal realm—which you can imagine was a shock to the general.

Where the Buddha was coming from was this: if you're in a battle trying to kill as many people as possible, well, as many people as possible are trying to kill you. And you are in fact mortally injured. What would be your state of mind? You would most likely be possessed by either aversion or by confusion and delusion. If your mind is dominated by aversion, you'd be reborn in hell. If your mind is dominated by delusion, you'll be reborn in the animal realm. In other words, your special status has got nothing to do with it. It's the state of your citta, your heart-mind. That's what decides what goes on.

This understanding of ethics the Brahmins couldn't stomach, because they were so wedded to the absolute hierarchy.

And finally, the Buddha had an attitude and a policy that anyone of any class whatsoever could enter his community, and once in it, each member is equal to everybody else. Everyone who practices the Eightfold Path is either Arya—cultivated—or, another translation could be aristocrat, refined, noble. Everybody who practices the path is Arya, and therefore everybody who practices the path is worthy of respect.

So it is not one's social status that ennobles a person. It's the path that ennobles a person. It's their ethical status that ennobles a person. And again, the Brahmins couldn't quite accept this.

So there's a certain amount of competition here. When the Buddha comes and sets up camp outside this Brahmin village, he knows there's going to be trouble. It's just a question of what form it will take. And at this point, it's become clear that the spearholder for the Brahmins is Kapatika.

He's staying in what you could call, in modern terms, a municipal Dharma center. Every town would have a place outside the town, convenient to get to, with water supply, shelter, and cooking facilities, where visiting teachers could set up camp and people could come listen to them and practice whatever they're teaching. I think it's a wonderful idea, and I think you should write to your local member.

The discourse begins when word spreads throughout the village that the Buddha has turned up and he's

got this very good reputation. There's a whole section of praise for the Buddha. But then there's a debate. The Brahmins start heading out there and Kanki sees them and thinks, I should go too. The senior Brahmins say, you can't go—you can't make him respectable like this. There's a little to-ing and fro-ing, and then eventually they all go out.

So Kapatika begins. He says, "Mr. Gotama"—you notice he doesn't call him Bhante, it's Mr. Gotama—"Mr. Gotama, in regard to the ancient chants that have come down through oral transmission and the passing on of the teachings, the Brahmanas come to the categorical conclusion: only this is true, anything else is wrong. What does Mr. Gotama say about this?"

So this is just hurling the challenge down. We're in the right. If you disagree with us, you're in the wrong. So what do you reckon? What do you say? What are you prepared to do about it?

And the Buddha responds. He says, "Well then, Bharadvaja." Now he calls him Bharadvaja because that's his clan name. Kapatika is one person whose personal name we actually know, but it's polite to use the clan name. Bharadvaja means "twice born," by the way, which is a Brahmin clan.

"Well then, Bharadvaja, is there even a single Brahmana who says, 'I see this, I understand this—only this is true, anything else is wrong'?"

Now what the Buddha was saying: when I see this, I understand this—the seeing is the direct firsthand experience. The understanding is how you interpret that direct firsthand experience.

And Kapatika says, "No, Mr. Gotama."

Now we get a sense of Kapatika's character. He's honest. And maybe this is one of the reasons why the Buddha thought, yes, I will debate this guy. Because he saw his potential.

So you notice the Buddha's first move: What is the experience that this or any belief is based on? First, clarify the experience, then form an opinion. This is what the Buddha is saying. For the Buddha, the ultimate foundation for belief is experience. And of course, when we talk about experience and we're looking at what this practice that we're doing is all about—it's all about clarifying experience, a continuity of awareness. Why? We want to be clear about the nature of the experience.

So then the Buddha goes on to ask the same question regarding the teachers of the Brahmanas. Is there any one of the teachers of the current generation Brahmanas who sees and understands?

And he goes back to seven generations. Number seven again. And then he asks the same question regarding, quote, the ancient brahmana seers, the creators of the chants. And chant in Pali is manta, in Sanskrit mantra. You probably recognise that word. And in each case, Kapadika has to admit, no.

And the Buddha concludes, suppose there was a line of blind men, each in touch with the next. The first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last one does not see. It appears that the brahmanas

are like a line of blind men. The first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last one does not see. What do you think, Bhadradvaja? That being so, does not the faith of the brahmanas turn out to be groundless?

So the Buddha's coming back with a bit of biffo. And Kapadika finds he has to shift ground, because you notice that Kapadika's opening line, his opening attack, shall we say, was based completely on faith.

So Kapadika shifts ground and says that the brahmanas honour this not only out of faith, Mr. Gautama, they also honour it as inherited tradition. In other words, what's been passed down in your culture, in your nation, what everybody around you accepts as "this is what's going on." There are some foreigners over there who have different opinions, but, you know, they're foreign. So we won't take any notice.

And then the Buddha replies, these five things, Bhadradvaja—and here he's starting to open the discussion up. He's starting to take hold of the debate and move it in the direction that he wants it to go. These five things, Bhadradvaja, can be seen to turn out in two different ways. What five? Faith, endorsement, inherited tradition, rational consideration, and acceptance of a view after thinking about it—these five things can be seen to turn out in two different ways. Something may be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false. Something else may not be accepted out of faith, and it may be factual, true, and unmistaken.

And again he goes through: something may be fully endorsed, well transmitted, well reasoned, well reflected upon, and yet it may be wrong. Something may not be fully endorsed, well transmitted, well reasoned, and well reflected upon, and yet it turns out to be true. You never know.

Therefore it is not proper for a wise person who guards truth to come to the definite conclusion that only this is true, anything else is false.

So faith, tradition, reason—we all have different reasons for justifying our beliefs. But the Buddha is saying there is always a possibility that we might be wrong.

Now the discussion shifts further to guarding truth. The Pali word could be translated as guarding, preserving, protecting. But here I've chosen guarding.

So Kapadika asks, in what way is there the guarding of truth? How does one guard truth? Now you notice that one of the things that's happened here: the conversation began about belief. Now it's moved on to truth. There's been a shift in the content.

If a person has faith, Bhadradvaja, he guards truth when he says, "This is my faith." But he does not yet come to the definite conclusion, "Only this is true, anything else is wrong." In this way, truth is guarded. In this way, one guards truth. In this way, we describe the guarding of truth. And then so on through the other ways for things that can be seen to turn out in two different ways. So if this is the way you've reasoned, you're guarding truth if you say, "This is how I reasoned it." But you're not guarding truth if you

jump to the conclusion, "Only this is true, everything else is false," and so on.

By the way, just notice how modern this approach sounds.

And then the Buddha says, but as yet, there is no awakening to truth. So guarding the truth is about accuracy.

And this accuracy is not so much aimed at the condition of the world—"only this is true"—but at the condition of the person who believes in something. So: "My faith is thus."

The Buddha is saying, first be clear about the distinction between my state of mind—what I think to be true, what I want to be true, what I fear to be true—make that a clear distinction between that, which is the state of one's mind, one's citta, on the one hand, and the state of the world on the other. These are two different things. Don't confuse one with the other.

I'm always reminded of something that Noam Chomsky said. In one of his books published a long time ago—his collected writings and so on—there's one section where he's giving a talk to activists. And the activists ask the question. They say, "Look, you've been doing this social activism business for a long time, and there doesn't seem to be any sign that things are getting better. If anything, they appear to be getting worse. How do you maintain your optimism?" This is a question which a lot of people involved in social activism are very much concerned about. But what Chomsky said was really interesting. He said, "My optimism and my pessimism tell me nothing about the world. They tell me about my state of mind. They tell me nothing about the world."

And the Buddha is making this same distinction. But, he says, as yet there is no awakening to truth. So Kapatika asks, "In what way is there awakening to truth? How does one awaken to truth?"

Now notice that Kapatika is being drawn into a discussion he did not originally plan. It's a classic case of the best laid plans vanishing the moment battle begins, on the first sight of the enemy. And this has happened to Kapatika. He's moved from guarding an already existing truth—which at first is assumed to be his own tradition—to awakening. And the suggestion here is that it's awakening to a new truth, something one had not previously imagined.

At this point we come to the heart of the discourse. How does one awaken to truth?

The Buddha says, "Here, Bharadvaja, a bhikkhu may live depending on some village or town." And that is the role of the bhikkhu and the bhikkhuni, of course—beggars. They live off the generosity of supporters. "Then a layperson goes to him and examines him in relation to three kinds of qualities: qualities based on attraction, qualities based on aversion, and qualities based on delusion." Attraction, aversion, delusion—lobha, dosa, moha—greed, hatred, ignorance. These are the three classic roots of the unwholesome.

Notice that awakening to truth starts with skepticism. People say, "This person has a good reputation. I'll

go and visit." But you don't go and visit, fall at their feet, and say, "Friend, I'm yours." You go and visit them and you check them out. You check out their behavior carefully. This is the advice that the Buddha gives. If you're wondering, "Should I take this person seriously? Should this person be a teacher?"—these are the questions to be asked and answered.

"Are there, in this venerable one, any qualities based on attraction—desire, greed, obsession, and so on—such that with his mind obsessed by them, while not understanding, he might say, 'I understand,' or while not seeing, he might say, 'I see,' or he might urge others to act in a way that would lead to their harm and suffering for a long time?"

So the second part concerns whether I see any indications of unethical behavior. But the first one is: Is there anything this person is saying that would appear to affect himself to the point where he would make a false claim? Is there anything about him which would make one suspicious that this person is going to blow his own trumpet?

to the point where he's going to say something which is false.

As the layperson examines him, he comes to understand there are no such qualities based on attraction, aversion, or delusion. So he goes through all three of them in terms of the question. There are no such qualities based on attraction, aversion, or delusion in this venerable one. His physical and verbal behaviour are not those of one affected by attraction, aversion, or delusion. And the Dharma he teaches is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise. This Dharma cannot easily be taught by one affected by attraction or aversion or delusion.

So if one is looking for truth, how do you start? Can you see a tendency towards desire, aversion, or delusion? And can you see any way in which these tendencies might be translated into action? In other words, truth is found not in our beliefs, but in how we respond to the world. You could say that truth is found in a person and their way of life, rather than some abstract belief that exists somehow independently of us. The quest for the discovery of truth is not one of a discovery for a certain kind of belief, but for a certain kind of person.

Truth is embodied, and it's embodied in actions of body and speech, because these actions directly reflect the state of one's mind. Of course, if we meet someone, we can't look into their minds. How do we make a judgment about them? We look at what they do, and we look at what they say. And the suggestion here is that we do this over a period of time. We check them out thoroughly.

The Buddha is suggesting that if the mind is clean and if the heart is pure, then what can be expected would be the demonstration of truth. Such a person can be trusted, and therefore her truth can be trusted.

Remember when we looked at the four truths? In Pali, *ariya saccāni—saccāni* is truths, so what is normally translated as "noble truths" is perhaps more accurately translated as "truths of noble people."

Because the focus is on the person.

The Buddha goes on: when he has examined him and has seen that he is purified from qualities based on attraction, aversion, and delusion, then he places faith in him. Filled with faith, he visits and pays respect to him. After paying his respect, he listens. When he listens, he hears the Dharma. Hearing the Dharma, he memorizes it.

This is our tradition—nothing written down. I think I mentioned that Burmese monastics to this day do an immense amount of memorization. The first resident teacher here, Sayadaw U Pannyatami, who's now living in Sydney, had one of the people at the centre who taught English as a second language. This person had a big thick manual and used to carry it around with him. One day the Sayadaw said, "Why do you keep carrying this book around?" The person explained, "Well, I need this for my work," and so on and so forth. The Sayadaw looked puzzled and said, "Why don't you just memorize it?"

So, hearing the Dharma, he memorizes it and examines the meaning of the teachings he has memorized. Thought. The Buddha doesn't dismiss thought. It's important. It's part of wisdom. It has its role.

When he examines the meaning, he gains a reflective acceptance of those teachings. Reflective acceptance—they make sense. When he has gained a reflective acceptance of these teachings, desire is born.

Now, of course, the Buddha has a reputation for thinking that desire is a bad thing. But here he's talking about how the movement toward Dharma, towards truth, begins with desire, a movement of the heart. When desire is born, he commits himself. Makes sense, doesn't it? If I want something, then I'll do something about it.

Committing himself, he explores. Exploring, he works. And "exploring" and "working"—these are code for meditation practice at this point. Resolutely working, he realizes with the body the supreme truth and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom.

This is a very brief kind of summary: he does the practice to the point of awakening.

Notice the expression: he realizes with the body the supreme truth.

This kind of expression appears a number of times with the Buddha. It's a very interesting one. It's literally "with the body"—*kāyena*. But there's debate among scholars: is this to be taken literally, or is this an idiom? It may well be an idiom. Sometimes you see it translated as "personally" or "for oneself," and I think that's a valid translation, provided we keep in mind that the person is physical. It's a sentient body that realizes the truth. There is a physicality to this which comes out in the early tradition, in the Buddha's own teaching, but in the later commentarial tradition gets written away and quietly buried.

Actually, one could say that "with the body" refers to the senses—a direct experience through all six senses, including mind. Absolutely. That's exactly what it's about. All six senses, not just mind.

"In this way, Bhaddra, there is awakening to truth. In this way, one awakens to truth. In this way, we describe awakening to truth."

So we begin to discover truth in people rather than beliefs. The community and its way of life come first, not the doctrine. The Buddha describes, first of all, a course of study: listening, memorizing, examining, reflectively accepting. And then from this comes a course of action: commitment, exploring, working, realizing. Again, you notice the centrality of thinking. The Buddha does not reject thinking and reason. He regards them as essential to the path. But he wants to see them grounded on experience or confirmed by experience.

So we study to get an idea of what's going on and what kind of thing we need to do if we're going to attain truth, and then we embark on a practice and see if it works. Further study can clarify experiences as we go along, and deeper experiences can assist us in intellectual understanding. They go together.

Now, the turning point that leads from the intellect to the practice is the awakening of desire. Without desire, we won't do anything. Unless the heart is moved to do something, all we have is a concept, which may be interesting but not anything that could challenge our existing way of life. You get people who are very interested in Buddhism—they might even say they are Buddhists—and they collect big libraries of books on Buddhism, but they never quite get around to doing the practice. Because the desire has not arisen. The heart has not moved.

What's important for the Buddha is always our way of life. How do we live? If we're looking for truth, we're looking for a way of living. And again, notice that the supreme truth is realized with the body—the sentient body that awares and that feels. There is an inescapable physicality about this tradition. Truth is not something abstract. It's not something removed from our messy physical world. Truth is found here, in this action, in this body.

We won't go on to the end of the sutta. I'm sure you'll be pleased to know that everybody's converted—there's good news all around. At least Kapaṭika is converted. But again, it's all about truth. Truth emerges in a course of study and practice that transforms a life. Truth is found in a way of life.

You notice that in this model, where the layperson hears about the practitioner, we often first notice this way of life in others. After getting to know this way of life from outside, it arouses desire, and then one realizes it for oneself by embarking on the path. This realization and practice takes place intimately in the body. Truth is embodied.

As a side issue, you get a sense of this in the word for truth in Pali and Sanskrit. In Pali it's *sacca*. In Sanskrit it's *satya*. And it comes from the same verb: to be, to exist.

So truth is what points toward the felt actuality of our situation. The just thisness. Remember we talked about just thisness? The rain is wet. This is what gives truth the power to transform our life.

From the Buddhist perspective, unless we are moved by truth, we have not actually experienced truth. We might think something is true, but not be struck by the actuality of the situation. And so we might not do anything about it. We might not respond in any real way. Truth is found in one's own way of life, in one's own body and mind.

Question from the audience about the revival of the bhikkhuni ordination in Western Australia

It wasn't actually the monastery that reinstituted the order of nuns. It was the nuns who reinstituted the order of nuns. But it was with the support of the monks in that monastery. This reflects the tradition that you need both sanghas to come together to agree.

This situation is a classic example of Buddhist dogmatism. There were people for whom, in their tradition, there were no bhikkhunis. Therefore, there must be no bhikkhunis until the next Buddha, who can re-establish it. On the other side, those supporting the bhikkhunis had done extensive research in the Vinaya, the legal code. They came up with ways that would satisfy the legal requirements for resurrecting the nuns' ordination. And of course, there was the moral argument—that even if it was legally impossible, it's a moral imperative that it should be done.

But then you've got people who are fixed in their view: we don't have it, therefore we can never have it. It was significant that the monastery in Western Australia took that stance. Their lineage split as a result, and it's still split to this day.

Now there's a flourishing female monastery out in Western Australia. There's another one in New South Wales, at Bundanoon, though that one hasn't flourished in the same way—they haven't had equally effective leadership. To be the head of a monastery or nunnery, you need to be reasonably enlightened, a very good practitioner, a very good communicator, and a very good entrepreneur, all in one person. It's a hard job, especially when you're starting out.

Ajahn Brahm was the one who had the clout to take the lead. And he just did it. He doubtlessly lost decades of friendships doing this, because there was a major split. The Sri Lankan sangha had already revived the ordination, but certainly not the Thais. And of course in Mahayana Buddhism, they've always had the bhikkhunis.

So in Taiwan, most of the sangha are female and they're fully ordained bhikkhunis. The one I'm familiar with is Korea. I don't know what the proportion is, but they have fully ordained bhikkhunis and they're pretty tough women—quite formidable. You don't mess with the bhikkhunis. It's not a good idea.

The last movement Burma made toward, not quite equality, but reducing the inequality, was in 1920, when they made a decision that women could study. Women in Burma can only be ordained up to the level of samaneri—novices with ten precepts—which is better than Thailand. But in 1920 they were admitted to the monastic education system and can study up to the degree of Dhammacharya, teacher of Dharma. This means they can become dharma teachers in their own right and be publicly accepted as

such. So now you've got female teachers and monasteries. But they're noticeably poorer than the men's monasteries.

The Mahasi Center is, strictly speaking, a combination. It's got a sima, an ordination hall where official acts of the sangha can take place, so it has a monastic component. But it's a meditation center owned and operated by a lay organization, not by the monks. The sayadaw is the head teacher, but he doesn't own or control the center. The lay organization does. So you have a separation between church and state.

And, should I say this? I did witness, back in the eighties, a clash between church and state when Upandita was the head teacher. Once a fortnight, the monks gather for their formal assembly, and there's a brief talk among other things. Usually the talk is about Vinaya, about the way of life and the rules. One day, Upandita said that the way the food is offered in the dining hall was not acceptable. There's a rule—which I suspect is late, but anyway—where if you offer something to a monk, it's got to be capable of actually lifting up and handing over. If it's too heavy, you can't do it.

At the Mahasi Center, there are hundreds of people, and all the food is offered. According to the Vinaya, you can only begin to eat at dawn. They have one monk every morning stationed looking toward the east, and he gives the signal as soon as there's light. Eating time is ready. Then a select band of monks go off to the dining hall and the food is offered to them.

It's a big hall and they have these really heavy tables, very low to the ground because you're sitting on the ground to eat. Each table is piled high with dishes of various kinds of food—quite good food, actually. A monk sits down in front of the table. The staff come. They lift up the table. He touches it. It goes down. Everything on that table is offered. Then they move to the next table. Boom, boom, boom, boom—in a few minutes, everything's offered. By this time, people are coming in and they don't have to worry about it. Everything's been offered.

But Upandita was suggesting that this wasn't legal, which would mean they'd have to offer every dish separately, or use trays or something. It was obvious at that point that war had just been declared. It was equally obvious, as the days rolled by and the staff continued to offer the food in exactly the same way, that Upandita had lost. It was not surprising to anybody that sometime after this he announced he was leaving and setting up his own center.

So you do have the argy-bargy sometimes—in a very civilized Buddhist way, of course.

I think we've gotten off the point, haven't we?

Yes, sir. Thank you.

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