

**INTRODUCTION TO THE EARLY BUDDHIST TEXTS  
IN SANSKRITISED PRĀKṚT**

*FROM*

**LITERARY HISTORY OF SANSKRIT BUDDHISM, CH 1-6**

*BY*

**J.K. NARIMAN**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER 1: TWO SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM.....</b>       | <b>5</b>  |
| ESSENCE OF MAHĀYĀNA .....                            | 5         |
| <b>CHAPTER 2: SANSKRIT BUDDHIST CANON .....</b>      | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>CHAPTER 3: MAHĀVASTU.....</b>                     | <b>9</b>  |
| IMPORTANCE OF MAHĀVASTU .....                        | 10        |
| ITS JĀTAKAS .....                                    | 10        |
| MAHĀVASTU AND PURĀṆAS .....                          | 11        |
| MORE MAHĀYĀNA AFFINITIES.....                        | 11        |
| ANTIQUITY OF MAHĀVASTU .....                         | 12        |
| <b>CHAPTER 4: LALITAVISTARA.....</b>                 | <b>13</b> |
| EXTRAVAGANT IMAGERY.....                             | 13        |
| CONCEPTION AND BIRTH OF BUDDHA.....                  | 14        |
| SIN OF UNBELIEF.....                                 | 14        |
| PĀLI AND SANSKRIT GO BACK TO AN OLDER SOURCE.....    | 15        |
| THE BUDDHA AT SCHOOL.....                            | 15        |
| ACTS OF THE BUDDHA.....                              | 15        |
| COMPONENT ELEMENTS OF LALITAVISTARA.....             | 16        |
| TRANSLATION INTO CHINESE AND TIBETAN .....           | 16        |
| RELATION TO BUDDHIST ART.....                        | 16        |
| NO IMAGE IN PRIMITIVE BUDDHISM.....                  | 17        |
| GENERAL ESTIMATE OF LALITAVISTARA.....               | 17        |
| <b>CHAPTER 5: AŚVAGHOṢA AND HIS SCHOOL .....</b>     | <b>18</b> |
| LIFE OF AŚVAGHOṢA .....                              | 18        |
| AŚVAGHOṢA'S GREAT WORK: THE BUDDHA'S BIOGRAPHY ..... | 19        |
| BUDDHACARITA AND KĀLIDĀSA .....                      | 20        |
| STATECRAFT, EROTIC ART AND WARFARE .....             | 20        |
| LOVE AND RELIGION.....                               | 21        |
| SYNTHESIS OF SCHOOLS .....                           | 21        |
| SŪTRĀLAMĀKĀRA .....                                  | 22        |
| VAJRASŪCI : POLEMIC AGAINST CASTE .....              | 23        |
| OTHER WORKS OF AŚVAGHOṢA.....                        | 23        |
| MĀTRĪCETA .....                                      | 24        |
| BUDDHIST POET ŚŪRA .....                             | 24        |
| MASTER'S SELFLESS LOVE .....                         | 25        |
| <b>CHAPTER 6: AVADĀNA.....</b>                       | <b>27</b> |
| VENERATION FOR THE BUDDHA.....                       | 27        |
| WHAT IS AVADĀNA?.....                                | 27        |
| AVADĀNAŚĀTAKA.....                                   | 28        |
| THE FIXED MODEL.....                                 | 28        |
| CULTURE EVIDENCES.....                               | 29        |
| AVADĀNAŚĀTAKA AND COGNATE TALES .....                | 30        |
| TIBETAN AND CHINESE ANALOGUES .....                  | 30        |
| DIVYĀVADĀNA .....                                    | 31        |
| CHARACTERISTICS.....                                 | 31        |
| ANALYSIS OF COMPONENTS.....                          | 31        |
| ŚĀRDŪLAKARṆA: LOVE OF THE UNTOUCHABLE .....          | 32        |
| AŚOKĀVADĀNA .....                                    | 33        |
| PĀLI PARALLELS .....                                 | 33        |

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| RŪPAVATĪ SACRIFICE .....             | 33 |
| KALPADRUMĀVADĀNAMĀLĀ.....            | 34 |
| UNEQUIVOCAL MAHĀYĀNISM.....          | 34 |
| MISCELLANEOUS AVADĀNAS.....          | 35 |
| AVADĀNAS IN CHINESE AND TIBETAN..... | 35 |

## PREFACE

What follows is drawn from the first six chapters of J.K. Nariman's Book *Literary History of Sanskrit Buddhism* (Bombay 1919). For the chapters we are reproducing here Nariman was relying mainly on Maurice Winternitz' *History of Indian Literature*, Vol II, pp. 217-282. These chapters concentrate on the early texts which have survived from the Early Buddhist Tradition, whereas the following chapters in both Winternitz' and Nariman's book proceed to the Mahāyāna texts proper.

The work is now quite dated in terms of its scholarly references, and these have been relegated to the footnotes. No attempt has been made to provide more up-to-date references, which would by now require an encyclopedic essay in itself. Despite these deficiencies the work provides a just overview of many of the main works that have survived from the earliest times, and still serves as an good introduction to these works.

The original publication of Nariman's text was in plain text and did not try to distinguish the original sounds, except for 'sh' which was used to represent both 'ś' and 'ṣ'. Here I have inserted the diacritics for the Indian languages, but have omitted the diacritics used for European languages and have been unable to correct the transliteration (minor though it is) of the Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan characters.

One problem I faced is that I do not have access to all the articles and books quoted by Nariman and therefore I have sometimes been unsure whether diacritics were used by the authors in the original titles. I have preferred to use them but it may be found that they were omitted in the source work.

The formatting in other respects was also deficient and some attempt to impose consistency on the presentation of the text has been attempted here, so that most foreign words are italicised, as are book and journal titles. I have written out references in full, so that there is no need for a list of abbreviations.

I have also occasionally inserted words that are needed to perfect the sense (they are placed in square brackets in the text that follows), or corrected words that have been misspelt (this has been done silently); and I have occasionally divided up long paragraphs to make them easier to read. I hope that the presentation of this work will serve to introduce readers to the riches that are available outside of the Pāli texts.

I am very grateful to Ven. Gavesako and Upasikā Lim Sze Wei for help in preparing this text for publication.

Ānandajoti Bhikkhu  
September 2009

## CHAPTER 1: TWO SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM

[3] However extraordinarily rich and extensive the Pāli literature of India, Ceylon and Burma may be, still it represents only the literature of one sect of the Buddhists.

Alongside of it in India itself and apart from the other countries where Buddhism is the dominant religion, several sects have developed their own literary productions, the language of which is partly Sanskrit and partly a dialect which we may call the mid-Indian and which is given the designation of “mixed Sanskrit” by Senart. Of this Sanskrit literature there have remained to us many voluminous books and fragments of several others while many are known to us only through Tibetan and Chinese translations. The major portion of this literature, in pure and mixed Sanskrit, which we for brevity’s sake call Buddhist Sanskrit literature, belongs either to the school known as that of the Mahāyāna or has been more or less influenced by the latter. For an appreciation, therefore, of this literature it is necessary in the first place to make a few observations on the schism in Buddhism which divided it early into two schools, the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna.

The most ancient Buddhist school, the doctrine of which coincides with that of the Theravāda, as perpetuated in Pāli tradition, sees in salvation or *Nirvāṇa* the supreme bliss and in the conception of *Arhatship*, which is already in this life a foretaste of the coming *Nirvāṇa*, the end and goal of all strivings - a goal which is attainable only by a few with the help of a knowledge which is to be acquired only in ascetic life. This original objective of early Buddhism has not been rejected by the adherents of the later or Mahāyāna school. On the other hand, it has been recognised as originating with the Buddha himself. It is characterised as the Hīnayāna or the ‘inferior vehicle’ which does not suffice [4] to conduct all beings to cessation of sorrow. What the later doctrine teaches is the Mahāyāna or the ‘great vehicle’ which is calculated to transport a larger number of people, the whole community of humanity, over and beyond the sorrow of existence. This new doctrine, as is claimed by its followers, rests upon a profounder understanding of the ancient texts or upon later mystical revelation of the Buddha himself and it replaces the ideal of the Arhat by that of the Bodhisattva. Not only the monk but every ordinary human being can place before himself the goal to be re-born as a Bodhisattva, which means an enlightened being or one who may receive supreme illumination and bring salvation to all mankind.

If this goal is to be made attainable by many there must be more efficient means for making it accessible to all than are to be found in the Hīnayāna doctrine. Therefore, according to the doctrine of the Mahāyāna, even the father of a family occupied with worldly life, the merchant, the craftsman, the sovereign - nay, even the labourer and the pariah - can attain to salvation on the one hand, by the practice of commiseration and goodwill for all creatures, by extraordinary generosity and self-abnegation, and on the other, by means of a believing surrender to and veneration of the Buddha, other Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. In the Pāli canon the Buddha is already sometimes shown as a superman, but he becomes such only because of his attainment to supreme illumination which enables him to perform miracles and finally to enter *Nirvāṇa*. What has remained for us as an object of veneration after his passing away is only his doctrine or at any rate his relics. The school of the Lokottaravādīs, which are a special sect of that Hīnayāna, go further and decline to see in the Buddha an ordinary man. For the Buddha is a superhuman being (*lokottara*) who comes down for a limited period of time for the succour of all mankind. [5]

### ESSENCE OF MAHĀYĀNA

In the Mahāyāna, on the other hand, the Buddhas from the first are nothing but divine beings and their peregrinations on the earth and their entry into *Nirvāṇa* no more than a freak or thoughtless play. And if in the Hīnayāna there is the mention of a number of Buddhas, predecessors of Śākyamuni in earlier aeons, the Mahāyāna counts its Buddhas by the thousand, nay, by the million.

Moreover, innumerable millions of Bodhisattvas are worshipped as divine beings by the Mahāyāna Buddhists. These Bodhisattvas who are provided with perfections (*pāramitās*) and with illumination, out of compassion for the world renounce their claim to *Nirvāṇa*. Furthermore, there are the Hindu gods and goddesses especially from the Śiva cycle who are placed on a par with the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who contribute to the amplification of the Buddhist pantheon. This newly formed mythology, this new Bodhisattva ideal and the much more vigorously prominent worship of the Buddha or *Buddha-bhakti* together form the popular phase of Mahāyāna. So far this process was already extant in the Hīnayāna, it developed itself under the influence of Hinduism; and similarly the philosophical side of Mahāyāna is only a further evolution of the doctrine of Hīnayāna under the influence of Hinduism.

The ancient Buddhism denied the Ego and saw in the knowledge of the non-Ego a path to *Nirvāṇa*, to extinction of the Ego. The Mahāyāna schools went still further and taught that not only there was no Ego, but that there was nothing at all - only a blank, *sārvam śūnyam*. They professed a complete negativism or *śūnyavāda* which denied both Being and non-Being at the same time or believed in idealistic negativism or *Vijñānavāda* which at least recognises a Being comprised in consciousness. As Max Wallaser [6] has put it, negativism is a better characterisation of the Mahāyāna philosophy than nihilism.

The Sanskrit literature in Buddhism, however, is by no means exclusively Mahāyānist. Before all the widely spread sect of the *Sārvāṣṭivādīs*, which belonged to the Hīnayāna and which is indicated by its designation of positivists, possessed a canon of its own and a rich literature in Sanskrit. Literally the doctrine of *Sārvāṣṭivāda* means the doctrine of All-Exists. [7]

## CHAPTER 2: SANSKRIT BUDDHIST CANON

Of this Sanskrit canon no complete copy is to be found. We know it only from larger or smaller fragments of its Udānavarga, Dharmapada, Ekottarāgama and Madhyamāgama which have been discovered from the xylographs and manuscripts recovered from Eastern Turkistan by Stein, Grunwedel and Le Coq, as well as from quotations in other Buddhist Sanskrit texts like the Mahāvastu, Divyāvadāna and Lalitavistara and finally from Chinese and Tibetan translations.

The literature of Central Asian discoveries has already assumed great proportions. The more important references are: Pischel, *Fragments of a Sanskrit Canon of the Buddhist from Idykutsari in Chinese Turkistan*, *Sitzungsberichte der Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften* 1904, p. 807. *New Fragments*, *ibid* p. 1138; *The Turfan Recensions of the Dhammapada*, *Sitzungsberichte der Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften* 1908, p. 968. What, however, Pischel regarded as the recensions of the Dhammapada are in reality fragments of the Udānavarga of Dharmatrāta, the Tibetan translation of which has been rendered into English by Rockhill in 1883, and the Sanskrit original of which Luders is going to edit from the Turfan finds. Vallee Poussin has discovered fragments of the same work in the collection brought from Central Asia by Stein and there is found Udāna [verses] corresponding to [those in] the Pāli Udāna (*Journale Asiatique*, 1912, p. 10, vol. xix, p. 311). Levi, *Journale Asiatique*, 1910, p. 10 vol. xvi, p. 444. On the other hand the ancient Kharoṣṭhī manuscript discovered in Khotan by Dutreuil de Rheins, important equally from the standpoint of palaeography and literary history, represents an anthology prepared after the model of the Dhammapada in Prakrit (*Comptes rendus de l'Academie des inscriptions*, May 1895 and April 1898; Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 1188; Senart *Orientalistenkongresse* XI, Paris, 1897, i, i, seq. *Journale Asiatique* 1898, p. 9, vol XII, [8] 193, 545; Luders *Nachrichten von der K. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen* 1899, p. 474; Rhys Davids *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1899, p. 426, and Franke *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 60, 1906, p. 477).

Buddhist Sūtras in Sanskrit inscribed on bricks have been found by V. A. Smith and W. Hoey in the ruins of Gopalpur along with inscriptions ranging between 250 and 400 A.D. (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* proceedings, 1896, p. 99). For translations into Chinese and Tibetan, see Oldenberg *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 52, pp. 654, 662; Anesaki *Le Museon*, new series xx, vi 1905, pp. 22-37. On a Chinese translation of a "Nirvāṇasūtra", see *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1881, p. 66.

To the Vinayaṭṭaka of the same canon belongs probably also the fragment of a ritual for the initiation of monks written in Sanskrit which was found in Nepal by Bendal as well as the *Prātimokṣasūtra* which is inferred from one Tibetan and four Chinese translations.

*Album Kern*, p. 373, and *Orientalistenkongresse* xiii, Hamburg, 1902, p. 58. S. Levi discovered the fragment of a Vinayaṭṭaka of the Sārvāṣṭivādīs in the Tokharian (*Journale Asiatique* 1912, p. 10, vol. xix, p. 101, Oldenberg *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 52, p. 645.)

The principal texts of the canon of the Mūlasārvāṣṭivādīs - this is the designation of the Sanskrit canon according to tradition - were translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in 700-712 by the Chinese pilgrim I-tsing.

J. Takakusu, *a record of Buddhist religion by I-tsing*, translated, Oxford 1896, p. XXXVII. See Anesaki *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1901, p. 895; Ed. Huber in *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient* VI 1906, p. 1, Sylvain Levi in the *Toung Pao*, V. 1904, p. 297; VIII, 110.

A sub-division of the Mūlasārvāṣṭivādīs are the Sārvāṣṭivādīs who had a Vinaya of their own just as the other three sub-divisions of the same school, viz., the Dharmaguptas, Mahīśāsakas and Kāśyapīyas (Levi ibid. p. 114, 1907). But the Chinese ‘Tripiṭaka’ does not mean the same [9] thing as the Pāḷi Tripiṭaka but contains also many non-canonical texts and even philosophical treatises of Brahmanism (Takakusu, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1896, p. 415.)

Likewise in the Tibetan Kanjur which is also denominated ‘Tripiṭaka,’ there is much which has no comparison with the Tripiṭaka of Pāḷi and which doubtless does not belong to the ancient canon. As in these so also in the Chinese and Tibetan, there are the sub-divisions into Vinaya, Sūtra and Abhidharma.

This Sanskrit canon in its Chinese rendering betrays in the texts and in the arrangements of its component books many coincidences with the Pāḷi canon and on the other hand many deviations from it. This is to be explained by assuming that the Pāḷi canon was first translated in some part of India first from a common source, probably the lost Māgadhī canon and later on in another province the Sanskrit canon branched itself off.

According to Sylvain Levi (*Toung Pao* 1907, p. 116) the Vinaya of the Sanskrit canon was first codified in the 3rd or 4th century after Christ. In the Sanskrit canon the Āgamas correspond to the Nikāyas in Pāḷi, the Dīrghāgama answering to the Dīghanikāya, the Madhyamāgama to the Majjhimanikāya, the Ekottarāgama to the Aṅguttaranikāya and the Saṃyuktāgama to the Saṃyuttanikāya. There was also a “Kṣudraka” corresponding to the Khuddakanikāya. Whether in this latter all those texts were included which in the Pāḷi canon are embodied in this Nikāya we do not know but we know that in the Sanskrit canon also there were corresponding to the Pāḷi texts of Suttanipāṭa a Sūtranipāṭa, Udāna corresponding to Udāna, to Dhammapada a Dharmapada, to Theragāthā a Sthaviragāthā, to Vimānavatthu a Vimānavaṣṭu and to Buddhavaṃsa a Buddhavaṃsa. It is doubtful whether the collection of the “seven Abhidharmas” [10] which stands translated in the Chinese Tripiṭaka was also derived from the ancient canon in as much as these Abhidharmas have nothing in common with the Abhidhammapiṭaka of the Pāḷi canon except the numeral seven and a few titles.

J. Takakusu, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. 1905, p. 138 and *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1905, p. 67,

Thus if the canon of the Mūlasārvāṣṭivādīs has been preserved only incompletely, the other Sanskrit Buddhist sects likewise give no closed canon, each having only one or more texts to which was accorded special sanctity as a kind of Bible and which assimilated the older texts of a Tripiṭaka recognised as such in principle and rejecting others. [11]

### CHAPTER 3: MAHĀVASTU

As belonging to the old school of Hīnayāna we have in the first place to mention the Mahāvastu “the Book of the Great Events.”

*Le Mahāvastu*, Sanskrit text, was published for the first time with introduction by E. Senart with a detailed conspectus of contents in the Introduction, Paris 1882-1897. A. Barth in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions.*, 11, 1885, p. 160; 42, 1900, p. 51 and *Journal des Savants* 1899, p. 459, p. 517, p. 623. E. Windisch, the *Composition of the Mahāvastu*, Leipzig 1909. A conspectus of the contents is also given by Rajendralal Mitra in his *Nepalese Buddhist Literature*, pp. 113-161.

The book gives itself the title of: “The Vinayapiṭaka according to the text of the Lokottaravādis belonging to the Mahāsaṅghikas.” These Mahāsaṅghikas, that is, the adherents of the Mahāsaṅgha or the Great Order are according to concurrent reports the most ancient Buddhist schismatics.

This is the only thing positive which we can ascertain regarding the rise of Buddhist sects from the contradictory and confused accounts. (Compare Kern *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 105).

A sub-division of theirs was the Lokottaravādis, that is, those according to whose doctrine the Buddhas are Supramundane or Lokottara and are only externally connected with worldly existence.

“Nothing in the perfectly Awakened Ones is comparable to anything in the world but everything connected with the great Ṛṣis is exalted above the world.” They wash their feet although no dust attaches to them, they sit under the shade although the heat of the sun does not oppress them, they take nourishment although they are never troubled with hunger, they use medicine although they have no diseases (Windisch loc. cit. p. 470). According to [12] the Mahāvastu, the Lokottaravādis belong to the Madhyadeśa or the 16 countries lying between the Himālaya and the Vindhya mountains (Mahāvastu V.1, p. 198.)

Entirely in keeping with this doctrine, the biography of the Buddha which forms the principal contents of the Mahāvastu is related as an “Avadāna” or a miraculous history. It is clearly not thereby differentiated much from the texts of the Pāli canon which are devoted to the life of the Buddha. Here in this Sanskrit text just as in the Pāli counterpart we hear of miracles which accompanied the conception, the birth, the illumination, and the first conversions brought about by the Buddha.

The Mahāvastu harmonizes with the Pāli Nidānakathā in this that it treats of the life of Buddha in three sections, of which the first starts with the life of the Bodhisattva in the time of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara (V. 1, 193) and describes his life in the time of other and earlier Buddhas. The second section (in V. 2, 1) takes us to the heaven of the Tuṣita gods, where the Bodhisattva who is re-born there is determined to seek another birth in the womb of Queen Māyā and relates the miracle of conception and the birth of the prince, of his leaving the home, his conflict with Māra, and the illumination which he succeeds in acquiring under the Bodhi Tree. The third section (V. 3), lastly recounts, in harmony with the principal features of the Mahāvagga of the Vinayapiṭaka, the history of the first conversions and the rise of the monastic order. And this is also one reason why the Mahāvastu is described as belonging to the Vinayapiṭaka, although barring a few remarks on the initiation of the Order it contains next to nothing about the Vinaya proper or the rules of the Order.

Note: The Mahāvastu does not contain the Pāḷi technical expressions, Dūrenidāna, Avidūrenidāna and Santikenidāna [which are found in the late Jātakanidāna]. See Windisch loc. cit. p. 473, 476 ff. [13]

When we, however, say that the Mahāvastu recounts the main outline of the life of the Buddha for the Lokottaravādis, that by no means implies that this exhausts the contents of the work; nor does it give an adequate idea of its composition. Far from being a literary work of art, the Mahāvastu is rather a labyrinth in which we can only with an effort discover the thread of a coherent account of the life of the Buddha. This account is constantly interrupted by other material, specially by the numerous Jātakas and Avadānas and also by dogmatic Sūtras. We find no order. Sometimes an attempt is made to put together in a loose fashion the various component parts of the work. Moreover, the same story is frequently repeated whether it be an episode in the life of the Buddha or a Jātaka, being related twice one after another, first in prose and then in verse, although in a more or less diverging version. But in several passages the same episodes recur with a trifling difference. Thus the legend of the Buddha's birth is recounted no less than four times (Windisch, *Buddha's Birth*, p. 106, 124 ff.). Again language is also not uniform. No doubt the whole work, both the prose and verse, is written in what we call "mixed Sanskrit," but this dialect makes a varying approach to Sanskrit. The more disparate it is from Sanskrit, the more ancient it appears (Oldenberg *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 52, 663).

#### IMPORTANCE OF MAHĀVASTU

Despite this and notwithstanding the circumstance that out of this book we learn hardly anything new on the life of the Buddha or of the Lokottaravādis, it is [still] of the greatest importance because it preserves for us many ancient traditions and old versions of texts which also occur in the Pāḷi canon. Thus the setting out of his home by the Prince Siddhārtha, the celebrated *abhiniṣkramaṇa* of Sanskrit books, is related, as in the Pāḷi Majjhimanikāya (26 and 36) in the most archaic fashion (V. 2, 117).

As [14] an instance of the various strata of the book we may mention another version of the same episode in the life of the Buddha and belonging to a later period which follows immediately after the first and more ancient recital in Mahāvastu. Similarly we find early versions of the celebrated "Benares sermon" and presentments of the following well-known texts in the Pāḷi canon:- The Mahāgovinda Sutta (Dīghanikāya 19) the Dīghanakhasutta (Majjhimanikāya, 74) the Sahassavagga of the Dhammapada, the Khuddakapāṭha, the Pabajjā, the Padhāna and the Khaggavisāṇa Suttas belonging to the Suttanipāta, and pieces from Vimānavatthu and the Buddhavaṃsa (Oldenberg *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 52, 659 f. 665 f. Windisch *Māra and Buddha*, 316 f, 322 f). There are poems, moreover, on the birth of the Buddha and vestiges of ancient Buddhist ballads which we so often come across.

#### ITS JĀTAKAS

Quite of special value is, however, the Mahāvastu as a mine of Jātakas and other stories. These have been separately treated by Serge d'Oldenberg (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1896, p. 335 f.) and by Barth (*Journal des Savants* 1889, p. 625 f.) Charpentier has discussed a few of the Jātakas in the Mahāvastu in his history of the Pacceka Buddhas (p. 2 f. 12 f, 25 f.) A good half of the book consists of Jātakas which are related partly in prose with verses inserted, or first in prose and then again in verse. Further we see the Bodhisattva now as a universal sovereign, now as the son of a merchant, then as a Brahman, again as a Nāga prince, as a lion, as an elephant, etc. Many of the Jātakas are versions of the same story which we find in the Pāḷi book of Jātakas. They harmonize word for word with the Pāḷi and many a time show more or less divergence. Thus, for instance, the Śyāmakajātika (V. 2, p. 209 f.), the pathetic story of the Brahman's son who is shot dead with his arrow by King Peliyakṣa is only a [15] version of the Sāmajātaka [Pāḷi No. 540] so

well known to us. The *Kinnarījātaka* (V. 2, p. 94 f.) corresponds in character, though not in contents to the Kinnara legend in the *Jātaka* book. *Kuśajātaka* appears once (V. 2, p. 420 f.) in a recension which is tolerably divergent from Pāli, a second time (V. 1, p. 3 f.) in metrical form which betrays resemblances with the Pāli *gāthās*. The story of Amara, the smith's daughter, (V. 2, p. 836) answers to the Pāli *Jātaka* No. 387. The *Markatajātaka* (V. 2, p. 246 f.) is the fable of the monkey and the crocodile and is known to us as No. 208 of the Pāli *Jātaka* book. The history of Nāliṇī who is seduced by Eka Śṛṅga, grows into a highly developed legend in Mahāvastu (V. 3, p. 143 f.). But it retains some of the more ancient features which have disappeared in the prose Pāli *Jātaka* of Isisiṅga (Luders, *Nachrichten von der K. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen* 1901, p. 20 f.)

### MAHĀVASTU AND PURĀṆAS

There are, however, many *Jātakas* and *Avadānas* in the Mahāvastu which have nothing corresponding to them in Pāli. In these are especially glorified again and again the extraordinary propensity to self-sacrifice and generosity on part of the Bodhisattva. Thus as King Arka, for example, the Bodhisattva bestows upon the Buddha of the age 80,000 grottoes or cave temples fashioned out of the seven kinds of precious stones (1, 54). On another occasion he surrenders his wife and child only [in order] to learn a wise maxim (1, 91 f.) As a beggar he is more pious than King Kṛki, for he kills no living being and places his pots on crossways in order that they may be filled with rice and grain for the hungry; and when he hears that his parents in his absence have given away to the Buddha the straw with which he had shortly before embellished his hut he rejoices over it for a month (1,317 f.) [Despite what Nariman said above this last corresponds to Ghaṭikāra the potter's story in *Majjhimanikāya* 81]. [16]

Many of the narratives bear the impress of a Brahmanic or Purāṇic character. Such is, for instance, the history of Brahmadata who is childless and betakes himself to the Ṛṣis upon which three birds are borne to him which speak with a human voice and utter many sapient proverbs. This story reminds us of the beginning of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. And incidentally it may be observed that portrayal of hell in the beginning of the Mahāvastu has points of contact with the same Purāṇa. It is, however in the Pāli tradition that we find the foundation of the visit of Maudgalyayāna to the 8th Inferno as well as his sojourn in the world of beasts and the world of Pretas, the *Asūras*, and various kinds of deities. For in the Pāli tradition also Moggallāna is a saint who roams through heaven and hell and all the worlds. However, the *Rājavaṃśa* or the *History of the Kings* to whose dynasty Śākyamuni belonged begins entirely after the fashion of the Purāṇas with an account of the creation (1, 338 ff.) The spirit of the Purāṇas is also breathed by the *Jātaka* (1, 283 ff.), in which a Ṛṣi named Rakṣita who is the Bodhisattva, attains to such miraculous powers as an ascetic that he touches the sun and the moon with his hand. The spirit of the Purāṇas is very similar to that of the Mahāyāna and many of the stories in the Mahāvastu betray the same partiality for the phantasmagorical - astounding sorcerers to perform the miracles of saints, so peculiar to the Mahāyāna texts. To this class belongs "the Story of the Umbrella" (*Chattravastu* I, 253 ff.) After the Buddha had freed the city of Śrāvastī of a terrible plague caused by *Yakṣas*, gods or spirits hold up umbrellas over the Buddha to do him honour. The latter however with his usual compassionateness makes one Buddha to appear under each umbrella by virtue of his supernatural powers so that each god believes that the Buddha is seated under his own umbrella. [17]

### MORE MAHĀYĀNA AFFINITIES

And, although the Mahāvastu belongs to the Hīnayāna and has contacts with much which may or actually does occur in the Pāli texts of the Theravādis, it embodies a good deal which makes an approach to the Mahāyāna. Thus, for instance, we find in the first volume (1, 63-193) a large section on the ten *Bhūmis* or places which a Bodhisattva has to go through and the description of the virtues which he must possess in each of the ten stages. In this section has been interpolated a

Buddhānuṣṃṛti (1, 163 ff.) that is, a hymn to the Buddha who in no way is here different from Viṣṇu or Śiva in the *stotras* of the Purāṇas. It is also in keeping with the idea of the Mahāyāna when it is said that the power of Buddha is so great that the adoration of the Exalted One alone suffices for the attainment of *Nirvāṇa* (II, 362 ff.) and that one earns for oneself infinite merit when one only circumambulates a stūpa and offers worship with flowers and so forth. That from the smile of the Buddha proceed rays which illuminate the whole Buddha field (*Buddhakṣetra*) occurs innumerable times in the Mahāyāna texts (III, 137 ff). It is also a Mahāyānist conception when mention is made of a great number of Buddhas and when it is stated that the Bodhisattva is not generated by father and mother, but springs directly from his own properties (Windisch, *The Buddha's Birth*, p. 97 Note, p. 100 f. and p. 193 f.)

#### ANTIQUITY OF MAHĀVASTU

The nature of the composition of the Mahāvastu entails the difficulty that the period when it was composed is very hard to determine. Many circumstances point to a high antiquity, for instance, the fact that it belongs to the Lokottaravāda school and also its language. That the work is entirely written in “mixed Sanskrit” while in the Mahāyāna texts this dialect alternates with Sanskrit, is a mark [18] of its greater antiquity. For, as Barth said Sanskrit is in Buddhist texts only an interloper (*Journal des Savants*, 1899, p. 459).

Certainly old are those numerous pieces which the Mahāvastu has in common with the Pāli canon and which go back to ancient Pāli sources. The *gāthās* of the Khadgaviśāṇa Sūtra (I. 357,) may be even older than the corresponding Khaggavisāṇa Sutta in the Pāli *Suttanipāta*. When, however, in the Mahāvastu these verses are sung by five hundred dying Pratyeka Buddhas then in their mouth they refrain. “He wanders lonely like a unicorn” sounds peculiarly incongruous and it becomes improbable that the prose portion should be as old as the *gāthās*.

To the time of the first century after Christ likewise point the Mahāyānist features already indicated as well as a few passages which seem to have been influenced by the sculptors of the Gandhāra art. When for example, in the scene of the flower miracle, the lotus flowers in the form of a circle fall round the halo of the Buddha, it may be noted that the halo was first introduced into India by Greek artists (see A Foucher *Journale Asiatique* 1903, p. 10, part II, p. 208, and his *L'art grecobouddhique du Gandhāra*, vol. I, p. 622; besides, the many Buddhas under the umbrellas remind us of the sculptured monuments). The reference in the Mahāvastu to the Yogācāras brings us down to the fourth century (I, 120); and so do the allusions to the Huns and the most interesting ones to the Chinese language and writing and the characterisation of astrologers as “Horāpāṭhaka” (III, 178). But the core of the Mahāvastu is old and probably was composed already two centuries before Christ, although it has been expanded in the fourth century after Christ and perhaps even at a later period. For it is only the embellishment that has been borrowed from the Mahāyāna, while on the other hand, it is merely a feeble admixture of the Mahāyāna doctrine proper and not of the Mahāyāna mythology which we find in the Mahāvastu. [19]

## CHAPTER 4: LALITAVISTARA

The Mahāvastu describes itself as a work belonging to Hīnayāna, although it has assimilated some of the Mahāyāna features. The Lalitavistara on the contrary is regarded as one of the most sacred Mahāyāna texts, as a Vaipulya Sūtra. It is a text-book of voluminous contents and gives the usual designation of a Mahāyāna Sūtra and yet originally the work embodied a descriptive life of the Buddha for the Sārvāṣṭivādi school attached to the Hīnayāna.

The Lalitavistara is edited by S. Lefmann who also brought out a translation of the first chapters in Berlin in 1875. The great Bengali scholar Rajendralal Mitra prepared an English translation for the Bibliotheca Indica of which 3 fasciculi have appeared. (Calcutta, 1881 to 1886). He has also brought out an incomplete text. A complete French translation by Foucaux appeared in Paris in the *Annals du Musee Guimet*, vol. vi, xix, (Paris, 1887-1892.) The Chinese tradition as to the Lalitavistara makes it a life of the Buddha representing the Sārvāṣṭivādi school (Beal, the *Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha* from the Chinese Sanskrit, London, 1875, Introduction. Also Foucaux's French translation of Lalitavistara introduction, vol. 11.) Beal's *Romantic Legend* is an abridged translation from the Chinese version of the Abhiṣkramaṇa Sūtra which has not been preserved in the original Sanskrit, but was translated into Chinese so early as 587 A.D. It appears to have been a biography of the Buddha representing the sect of the Dharmaguptas.

The Mahāyāna idea however corresponds already to the very title of the Lalitavistara which means the "exhaustive narrative of the sport of the Buddha." Thus the lifework of the Buddha on the earth is characterised as the diversion (*lalita*) of a supernatural being.

In the introductory chapter the Buddha appears as an exalted divine being, although the chapter starts after the mode of the ancient Pāḷi Suttas with the words: "So have I heard. Once upon a time the Master was sojourning at Śrāvastī in the Jeta Park in the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada." [20]

### EXTRAVAGANT IMAGERY

But while in the Pāḷi texts the Master is introduced with these or similar stereotyped initial phrases and is surrounded by a few disciples or at the most his suite of "500 monks," and then immediately the Sutta proper begins, in the Lalitavistara, as in all the Vaipulya Sūtras of the Mahāyāna, the picture that is outlined of the Buddha is a grandiose one encircled by divine radiance. He is surrounded by twelve thousand monks and by no less than thirty-two thousand Bodhisattvas, "all still in the trammels of only one re-birth, all born with the perfections of a Bodhisattva, all enjoying the knowledge of a Bodhisattva, all in the possession of an insight in magical charms" and so forth.

While in the middle watch of the night the Buddha sits sunk in meditation, from his head issues forth a stream of light which penetrates into the heavens and sets all the gods in commotion. These latter forthwith chant a hymn of praise to the exalted Buddha and soon after appear Ívara and the other divinities before the Master, [who] throw themselves at his feet and implore him to reveal the excellent Vaipulya Sūtra called the Lalitavistara for the salvation and blessing of the world. While they panegyricize in extravagant terms the excellences of the text revealed by this and even earlier Buddhas, the Buddha expresses his assent by silence. Only after these circumstantial introductions, which fill a large chapter commences the biography proper of the Buddha which forms the contents of the work. And it starts indeed just from where in the Pāḷi Nidānakathā the second section (*avidūrenidāna*) begins.

### CONCEPTION AND BIRTH OF BUDDHA

The Bodhisattva abides in the heaven of the Gratified (*Tuṣita*) gods in a glorious celestial palace. The Bodhisattva is the recipient of over a hundred honorific epithets and the celestial palace in which he resides of over a dozen. Under the sound of eighty-four thousand drums he is called upon to descend to the [21] earth to commence his work of salvation. After long consultations in which the excellences and the deficiencies of a large number of princely families are weighed the Bodhisattva finally decides to be re-born in the house of King Śuddhodana in the womb of Queen Māyā. She alone possesses all the qualities of a Buddha's mother. Perfect like her beauty, which is described to minutest detail, are her virtue and chastity. Besides, of all the women of India she is the only one in a position to bear the future Buddha since in her is united the strength of ten thousand elephants. The conception proceeds with the assistance of the gods after the Bodhisattva had determined to enter the womb of his mother in the form of an elephant. The gods prepare not only a celestial residence for Māyā during her lying in, but construct a palace of jewels in her womb so that the Bodhisattva may not remain soiled there for ten months. In this palace of jewels he sits in his marvellous tenderness. But his body shines in glorious sheen and a light expands itself for miles from the womb of his mother. The sick come to Māyā Devī and are cured of their diseases as soon as the latter places her hand upon their head. And whenever she looks towards her right she sees the Bodhisattva in her womb "just as a man beholds his own face in a clear mirror." The yet unborn Bodhisattva in his mother's womb delights the celestials by pious sermons and the god Brahmā obeys his every suggestion.

This part is comprised in chapters 2 to 6. The beginning of the sixth chapter has been translated by Windisch in his *Buddha's Geburt*, p. 162 ff.

As the conception so also the Bodhisattva's birth. It is accompanied by miracles and portents. In the Lumbini Park he is born in the manner well known to us through numerous sculptures though not like an ordinary human but as an omniscient Exalted Being, as a Mahāpuruṣa, "The Great Spirit." Lotus flowers are strewn under every [22] step of his and the newborn child announcing his greatness takes seven steps towards each of the six cardinal points.

The creator Prajāpati is characterized as Puruṣa and Mahāpuruṣa in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads and subsequently also Brahmā and Viṣṇu. The seven steps of the new born child Buddha are also to be explained from the myth of the march of Viṣṇu.

### SIN OF UNBELIEF

Here the narrative [is] interrupted by a dialogue between Ānanda and the Buddha in which vehemence is shown towards every unbeliever who does not credit the miraculous birth of the Buddha (chapter vii, p. 87 to 91). Faith in the Buddha is taught as an essential component of religion. And we are reminded of Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavadgīta when the Buddha says:

"To all who believe in me I do good. Like friends are they to me who seek refuge in me. And many a friend the Tathāgata has. And to those friends the Tathāgata only speaks the truth, not falsehood.... To believe Ānanda should be thy endeavour. This I commend unto you."

Why this dialogue should appear just here is certainly not due to accident, but is based on the fact that it is with reference to the legends relating to the conception and the birth of the Buddha that the Lalitavistara diverges very strikingly from other Buddhist schools in its extravagance as to the miraculous. It is no longer so in the future course of the narrative. Indeed there is here very often an extraordinary harmony with the most ancient Pāli account, e.g., that of the Mahāvagga of the

Vinayapiṭaka, although it may be noted incidentally that the Gāthās of the Lalitavistara appear more ancient than those in the corresponding Pāli texts.

The relation of the Pāli tradition to the Lalitavistara is treated of by Oldenberg in *Orientalistenkongresse*, V 1882, vol. 2, [23] p. 1017 to 1022 and Windisch in *Māra and Buddha and Buddha's Birth* as well as by Kern in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 21, p. xi ff and last but not least by Burnouf *Lotus de la Bonne Loi*, p. 864 f.

### PĀLI AND SANSKRIT GO BACK TO AN OLDER SOURCE

The two texts in such cases are not dependent upon each other, but both go back to a common older tradition. But even here the Lalitavistara has much that is wanting in the older accounts. Two episodes in particular are noteworthy. One of these recounts (chapter 8) how the Bodhisattva as a boy is brought by his foster mother to the temple and how all the images of the gods rise up on their pedestals to prostrate themselves at his feet. The other episode (chapter 10) relates the first experience of the Bodhisattva at school.

### THE BUDDHA AT SCHOOL

With a suite of ten thousand boys with immense pomp in which the gods participate - eight thousand heavenly damsels for instance scatter flowers before him - the small Bodhisattva celebrates his admission into the writing school. The poor schoolmaster cannot bear the glory of the divine incarnation and falls to the ground. A god raises him up and tranquillizes him with the explanation that the Bodhisattvas are omniscient and need no learning, but that they come to school only following the course of the world. Then the Bodhisattva amazes the schoolmaster with the question as to which of the 64 scripts he was going to instruct him in. And he enumerates all the sixty-four in which are included the Chinese symbols and the script of the Huns - alphabets of which the teacher did not know even the names. Finally with the ten thousand boys he commences his study of the alphabet. With every letter of the alphabet the Bodhisattva pronounces a wise maxim. [24]

According to E. Kuhn, *Gurupūjā Kaumudi* (p. 116 f.) these two legends of the child Buddha may have served as models for the Gospels Apocrypha which relate similar stories of the child Jesus. The chapter 12 and 13 also contain episodes which are wanting in the other biographies of the Buddha (Winternitz WZKM 1912, p. 237 f.)

### ACTS OF THE BUDDHA

On the other hand in its further course the Lalitavistara narrative (chapters 14-26) deviates only a little from the legend known to us from other sources; the principal events in the life of the Buddha being the four meetings from which the Bodhisattva learns of old age, disease, death and renunciation; the flight from the palace; the encounter with King Bimbisāra; Gautama's years of instruction and his futile ascetic practices; the struggle with Māra; the final illumination and the enunciation of the doctrine to the world at large at the request of god Brahmā. But even here the Lalitavistara is remarkable for its exaggerations. While Gautama, for instance, passes the four weeks after his illumination, in our most ancient account, in meditation under various trees (Mahavagga 1, 1-4, Dutoit *Life of the Buddha*, p. 66), in the Lalitavistara (p. 377), in the second week, he goes out for a long promenade through thousands of worlds and in the fourth week takes a small walk, which stretches only from the eastern to the western ocean. The last chapter (27) however is once again after the fashion of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, a glorification of the book of Lalitavistara itself, and is devoted to the enumeration of the virtues and the advantages which a man acquires by its propagation and reverence.

### COMPONENT ELEMENTS OF LALITAVISTARA

From all these it is quite probable that our Lalitavistara is a redaction of an older Hīnayāna text expanded and embellished in the sense of the Mahāyāna - a biography of the Buddha representing the Sārvāṣṭivāda school. This assumption also explains the nature of the text which is by no means the single work of [25] one author, but is an anonymous compilation in which very old and very young fragments stand in juxtaposition. The book moreover consists, according to its form, of unequal sections, a continuous narrative in Sanskrit prose and numerous, often extensive, metrical pieces in "Mixed Sanskrit." Only rarely these verses constitute a portion of the narrative. As a rule they are recapitulations of prose narration in an abbreviated and simpler and sometimes also more or less divergent form. Many of these metrical pieces are beautiful old ballads which go back to the same ancient sources as the poems of the Pāli Suttanipāta mentioned above. The examples are the birth legend and the Asita episode in chapter VII, the Bimbisāra history in chapter XVI and the dialogue with Māra in chapter XVIII. They, belong to the ancient religious ballad poesy of the first centuries after the Buddha. But several prose passages also, like the sermon at Benares in the XXVIth chapter, are assignable to the most ancient stratum of Buddhistic tradition. On the other hand the younger components are to be found not only in the prose but also in the *Gāthās*, many of which are composed in highly artistic metres. Such are the Vasantatilaka and Śārdūlavikrīḍita which are tolerably frequent (see the index to metres in Lefmann's edition VII, p. 227 f, and Introduction, p. 19 ff).

### TRANSLATION INTO CHINESE AND TIBETAN

We do not know when the final redaction of the Lalitavistara took place. It was formerly erroneously asserted that the work had already been translated into Chinese in the first Christian century. As a matter of fact we do not at all know whether the Chinese biography of the Buddha called the Phuyau-king which was published in about 300 A.D., the alleged "second translation of the Lalitavistara," is really a translation of our text (Winternitz, WZKM 1912, p. 241 f.) A precise rendering of the Sanskrit text is in the Tibetan, which was only [26] produced in the 5th century. It has been edited and translated into French by Foucaux. It may be taken for certain that a version little different from our Lalitavistara was known to the artists who about 850-900 decorated with images the celebrated temple of Borobudur in Java. For these magnificent scriptures represent scenes in the legend of the Buddha in a manner as if the artists were working with the text of the Lalitavistara in the hand. And Pleyte has simply recapitulated the entire contents of the Lalitavistara as an explanation of the sculptures (*The Buddha legend in the sculpture in the temple of Borobudur*, Amsterdam, 1901. See also Speyer *La Museon* 1903, p. 124 ff).

### RELATION TO BUDDHIST ART

But the artists who embellished the Greco-Buddhistic monuments of Northern India with scenes from the life of the Buddha are also already familiar with the Buddha legend as related in the Lalitavistara. They worked no doubt not after the text, but in accordance with living oral tradition. The harmony, nevertheless, between the sculptures and the Sanskrit text is not rarely of such a character that we must assume that the literary tradition was at times influenced by the artist. Upon art and literature there was mutual influence.

The authorities to be consulted here are *L'art Greco-bouddhique du Gandhāra*, part I, 324 f. 666 ff; Grunwendel *Buddhist Art in India*, p.94, 04 f, 134; Senart *Orientalistenkongresse XIV*, 1905, 1,121 ff; and Bloch *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 62, p. 370 ff.

### NO IMAGE IN PRIMITIVE BUDDHISM

While the ancient Buddhistic art in the time of Aśoka, in the reliefs of Bharhut, Sanchi, etc., knows of no image of the Buddha but only a symbol (e.g., the wheel) for the person of the Founder of the religion, a representation of the Buddha is the principal object of the Gandhāra art. Can it not be connected with this that in the intervening centuries the Buddha became an object of *Bhakti* and the adoration of the Buddha was pushed into the central point of his religion? Thus there is [27] concurrent testimony that the age of the Gandhāra art, the floruit of which falls in the second century after Christ, was also the period of Mahāyāna texts which treat of the Buddha legend.

“On the grounds of style derived in the first instance from Greco-Roman art the period of the development can only be the period from the birth of Christ to the fourth century.”  
*Grunwendel Buddhist Art in India*, p. 81. According to Foucher *L'art Greco-bouddhique du Gandhāra*, part 1. p.40 ff. the flourishing period of the Gandhāra art coincides with the second half of the second century A.D.

### GENERAL ESTIMATE OF LALITAVISTARA

It is, therefore, but natural that we should have preserved in the Lalitavistara both the very old tradition, and accounts younger by centuries, of the legend of the Buddha. An important source of old Buddhism it is only there, where it coincides with the Pāli texts and other Sanskrit texts like the Mahāvastu. But it is erroneous to regard the Lalitavistara in its entirety as a good old source for our knowledge of Buddhism as does Senart in his ingenious and unsuccessful *Essai sur la legende du Buddha*, (p. 31 f., 456 f.). Nor does the Lalitavistara give us a clue “to popular Buddhism” of older times as is claimed by Vallee Poussin. It is rather a key to the development of the Buddha legend in its earliest beginnings, in which only the principal events of the life of the great founder of the religion have been adorned with miracles, down to the final apotheosis of the Master in which from start to finish his career appears more like that of a god, above all the other gods. But from the standpoint of literary history the Lalitavistara is one of the most important works in Buddhist literature. It is not indeed a Buddha epic proper, but it embodies all the germs of one. It was from the ballads and episodes which have been preserved in the oldest elements of the Lalitavistara, if probably not from the Lalitavistara itself, that the greatest poet of Buddhism, Aśvaghōṣa, created his magnificent epic called *Buddhacarita* or Life of the Buddha. [28]

## CHAPTER 5: AŚVAGHOṢA AND HIS SCHOOL

Authorities: Sylvain Levi, *Le Buddhacarita d'Aśvaghōṣa*, *Journale Asiatique* 1892 p. 8, vol. XIX, p. 201 ff. When Levi at p. 202 characterises the *Buddhacarita* as “a substantial abridgment of the Lalitavistara” he is in the wrong. At least the Lalitavistara in its present redaction could not have been the model of Aśvaghōṣa. The *Buddhacarita* has been edited by Cowell, Oxford 1893, and translated by him in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XLIX. On Aśvaghōṣa and his importance to Indian literature, Sylvain Levi deals in his comprehensive study *Aśvaghōṣa le Sūtralankra et ses sources* in *Journale Asiatique* 1908, p. 10, vol. XII, p. 77. ff. Anesaki in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* vol. II 159 f. We now know from the discoveries of Luders that Aśvaghōṣa was also a dramatic poet, as the author of the *Śāriputraprakaraṇa* see *Sitzungsberichte der Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1911, p. 388 ff. A biography of Aśvaghōṣa by Kumārajīva was translated into Chinese between 401 and 409 A.D. It is given as an excerpt by Wassiljew in his *Buddhism* though it is a wholly legendary account.

Down to the year 1892 when the French scholar Sylvain Levi published the first chapter of the *Buddhacarita*, people in Europe knew little of Aśvaghōṣa beyond his name. To-day he is known to us as one of the most eminent poets of Sanskrit literature, as the masterly model of Kālidāsa and as the author of epic, dramatic and lyrical poems. Unfortunately, however, we know very little of his life. All tradition agrees that he was a contemporary of king Kaniṣka (about 100 A.D.) and that he was one the leaders, if not the founder, of the Mahāyāna doctrine of Buddhism.

On the uncertainty of the age of Kaniṣka see above vol. I, p. 437; Franke and Fleete independently come to the conclusion that Kaniṣka came to power in 5253 B.C. On the contrary, R. G. Bhandarkar (*Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XX ff 19,385 ff) is of opinion that Kaniṣka lived in the third century A.D. Boyer in *Journale Asiatique* 1900, V. XV. p.526 ff. makes it probable that he lived at the end of the first and the beginning of the second century A.D. In his latest investigation on the era of Kaniṣka, Oldenberg comes to the conclusion that he is to be assigned to the close of the first century A.D. (*Nachrichten von der K. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen* 1911, p. 421-427). To the same result arrives on other grounds Pandit Haraprasada Shastri (*Sundaranandam Kāvyaṃ*, p.427). He would also identify the poet with Aśvaghōṣa Rājā occurring in an inscription of [29] the times of Kaniṣka. (Ep. Ind, VIII, 171 f.) which however Vogel considers to be an unsuccessful attempt.

### LIFE OF AŚVAGHOṢA

Quite positively Aśvaghōṣa came of a Brahman family and had a sound Brahmanic education before he went over to Buddhism. As a Buddhist he joined, we may surmise, at first the Sārvāṣṭivāda school but laid great stress on Buddha *Bhakti* and thus prepared for the Mahāyāna. As his birthplace or home is mostly mentioned Sāketa or Ayodhya, modern Oudh. But Benares and Patna are also mentioned in this connection. His mother's name was Suvarṇakṣī. The Tibetan life of Aśvaghōṣa says of him: “There was no question that he could not solve, there was no objection which he would not remove; he threw down his opponents as fast as a strong wind breaks down decayed trees.”

According to the same account he was a distinguished musician who himself composed music and with his troupe of minstrels, male and female, roamed through market towns. There he played and sang with his choir melancholy ditties on the nullity of existence and the crowd stood charmed with his entrancing melody. In this way he won many over to his religion. According to Vaśubandhu he assisted Kātyāyaniputra in the preparation of his commentary on the Abhidharma.

The Chinese pilgrim I-tsing, who journeyed through India in 671-695 speaks of the learned monks who successfully combated the heretics, furthered the religion of the Buddha and were

consequently esteemed higher than gods and men by the people. And he adds that in each generation there are only a couple of such men - men like “Nagārjuna, [Āryā-]Deva and Aśvaghōṣa of antiquity.” [30]

Hiuen-tsiang calls Aśvaghōṣa, Deva, Nāgārjuna and Kumāralabdha “the four suns which illuminate the world” (*Sacred Books of the East* Vol. 49, p. 9). The same I-tsing relates how in his time in India was read in front of Buddhist shrines *inter alia* a manual of sacred texts prepared by Aśvaghōṣa. He also knows him as the author of hymns, of *Sūtrālamkāra* and of the *Buddhacarita* (I-tsing *Record* translated by Takakusu, p. 152, f. 165, 181).

### AŚVAGHOṢA’S GREAT WORK: THE BUDDHA’S BIOGRAPHY

Of the *Buddhacarita* I-tsing says that it was a voluminous poem which recounted the life and the work of the Buddha “from the time when he was still living in the royal palace till his last hour in the park of the sal trees.” He adds: “It is extensively read in all the five parts of India and in the countries of the South Sea (Sumātra, Jāva and the neighbouring islands). He clothed manifold notions and ideas in a few words which so delighted the heart of his reader that he never wearied of perusing the poem. Moreover it was regarded as a virtue to read it in as much as it contained the noble doctrine in a neat compact form” (I-tsing p. 165 f.). From what I-tsing says it follows that he knew the *Buddhacarita* in the form of its Chinese translation in which the epic consists of 28 cantos and the narrative is brought down to the *Nirvāṇa* of the Buddha.

It is the Fo-sho-hing-tsan translated from Sanskrit into Chinese between 414 and 421 by Dharmarakṣa and by Beal from Chinese into English in *Sacred Books of the East* XIX, Rhys Davids (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1901, p.405 f.) has rightly emphasized that this Chinese work is no translation in our sense. Much more accurate is the rendering of the 7th or 8th century into Tibetan (Leumann, WZKM 7,1893, p, 193 ff.).

Now since the Tibetan translation also contains 28 cantos we must indeed suppose that in the Sanskrit text which comprises only 17 cantos and terminates with the [31] conversions in Benares we have only a torso; and in fact it is but a torso. For out of these 17 cantos only the first 13 are old and genuine. The concluding portion was supplied by one Amṛtānanda, who lived as a copyist in the beginning of the 19th century, because he himself admits he could find no complete manuscript. Even the manuscript of the *Buddhacarita* discovered by Haraprasada Shastri reaches down only to the middle of the 14th canto (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* Vol. 5 p. 47 ff.).

And what the Chinese pilgrim says in eulogy of the *Buddhacarita* we can completely substantiate on the basis of the torso we possess. Here we have in reality for the first time a proper Buddha epic created by a true poet - a poet who, permeated with love and reverence for the exalted person of the Buddha and profound reverence for the verity of the doctrine of the Buddha, represents the life and the teaching of the master in noble language of art which is not artificial. The *Buddhacarita* is technically called a *Mahākāvya* or great poem - a courtly epic in art and it is composed in the style appropriate to *Kāvya*, the beginnings of which we find in the Rāmāyana. Vālmīki and his immediate followers were the predecessors of Aśvaghōṣa just as the latter himself was a forerunner of Kālidāsa. All the three great poets, however, agree in this that in the employment of *Alamkāras* or poetic embellishment they are throughout moderate. And moderate as to language and style is Aśvaghōṣa also in the presentment of the miraculous in the Buddha legend. He eschews the extravagance such as we find for example in the *Lalitavistara*.

In contrast with the chaotic disorder of the text of the *Mahāvastu* and the *Lalitavistara* we find in the *Buddhacarita* a considered and artistic arrangement of the material. And although the poet is at home with the older sacred texts he stands independent of them. Not that he has in any way [32]

altered the tradition; he understands how to invest with a new poetic garb the legend known of old and to lend originality of expression to the doctrine of the primitive Buddhistic *sūtras*. Always is Aśvaghōṣa more of a poet than a monk - at least in his *Buddhacarita*. As Windisch observes, Aśvaghōṣa seems to have diligently avoided the ring of the phraseology of the older texts (*Māra and Buddha*, p. 205).

### BUDDHACARITA AND KĀḶIDĀSA

Quite differently poetical for instance from that of the *Lalitavistara* is the picture of the young prince going out for a walk in cantos 3 and 4.

Here in a charming way is depicted how when the news arrives that the prince had gone out the ladies of the city in their curiosity hasten from their chambers to the roofs of the houses and to the windows, hindered by their girdles which fall off, and rush forward with the greatest haste pressing on and pushing each other, frightening by the clank of their waistbands and the ring of their ornaments the birds on the roofs. The faces of the beauties, charming as lotus, gleaming out of the windows appear, as if the walls of the houses were really decorated with lotus flowers. As Cowell has already noticed in the preface to his edition the *Buddhacarita*, Kāḷidāsa has imitated this scene from Aśvaghōṣa (*Buddhacarita*, iii 13/24) in his *Raghuvamśa* (vii, 5/12). The meeting with the old man whom the gods cause to appear before the prince is charmingly described. In his astonishment the prince asks:

“Who is the man coming this side, oh charioteer?  
With white hair, eyes sunk deep in their socket,  
Bending over his staff, his limbs quavering?  
Is that Nature’s course or a sport of Chance?” [33]

To this the charioteer replies:

“Old age it is that has broken him - age,  
The thief of beauty and the destroyer of strength,  
The source of sorrow and the end of joy,  
The foe of intelligence and the disappearance of memory.  
He too sucked at his mother’s breast,  
As a child learnt to walk in course of time.  
Slowly he grew big and strong - a youth,  
By degrees has old age crept on him.”

After the prince had on his three walks out of his palace learnt of old age, disease and death, no more could he find any joy in life. It is in vain that the family priest by order of the king calls upon the women and maidens of the palace to bend their energies on their seductive art to soothe the prince and turn him from his distressing thoughts. The prince remains untouched by the soft distractions. He only thinks of the unthinking ways of these women and cries out (iv 60 f.):

“How senseless the man appears to me whose neighbour ill and old and dead he  
Sees and yet holds fast to the good things of this life and is not thrilled with anxiety.  
It is as if a tree divested of all flower and fruit must fall or be pulled down -  
Unaffected remaining the neighbouring trees.”

### STATECRAFT, EROTIC ART AND WARFARE

The presentment of the love scenes belongs to the indispensable element in the poetic are as an appanage to the court. And the poet satisfies this demand in depicting the sports of the lovely

maidens who endeavour to draw the prince towards themselves (iv, 24/53) just as well as in the vivid portrayal of the [34] night scene in the ladies' chamber which causes the prince to fly from the palace. These themes give Aśvaghōṣa the opportunity for the display of his erotic art. It may be noted that the description (v, 48/62) in its primitive shape is recounted by the young Yasa in the Pāli Vinaya-piṭaka. We have already had occasion to remark that a similar scene in the Rāmāyana (v, 9/11) has been copied from this Buddhist poet Aśvaghōṣa. The court poet, however, must also be familiar with the doctrine of the *nītiśāstras* or statecraft. And the world-wide principles are unfolded to the prince by the priest attached to the royal household in order to divert his mind from his meditations (iv, 62/82). Finally, belonging to the same species of court poetry is the delineation of the battle scene. Here our poet rises to the occasion in that in the thirteenth canto he conjures up a vivid scene of the struggle of the Buddha with Māra and his hordes.

### LOVE AND RELIGION

Aśvaghōṣa was the author of another poem to be classed in the category of court poetry viz., *Saundaranandakāvya*. The lucky discoverer and editor of this poem is Pandit Haraprasada Shastri (A. Bastion, *Journale Asiatique* 1902, vol. xix, p. 79 ff and F. W. Thomas *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1911 p. 1125). It also turns round the history of the Buddha's life, but limns especially those scenes and episodes which have been either lightly touched upon or not treated at all in the *Buddhacarita*. Thus in the first canto is exhaustively described the history of the finding of the city of Kapilavastu. The actual content of this poem, however, is constituted by the history of the loves of Sundarī and Nanda, the half-brother of the Buddha who is initiated into the Order against his will by the latter: [35]

Just as Sundarī, the lovely bride of Nanda, weeps and wails over her lost husband so does Nanda suffer for his beloved. Vain are the attempts of the brother monks to tranquilize him. Even the word of the Buddha is impotent to reconcile him. Then the Master takes him by the hand and rises with him to heaven. On their way they see in the Himālayas a hideous one-eyed female monkey and the Buddha asks Nanda if Sundarī was more charming than she and Nanda naturally says 'Yes' with energy. Soon after, however, they see in the heaven the *apsaras* or celestial nymphs and Nanda finds that the difference between them and his wife is as great as that between the latter and the one-eyed ape. From this moment onwards he is possessed with a passionate longing for the fairies and returning on earth gives himself up to serious ascetic practices in order to be able to attain to the paradise.

Thereupon Ānanda, the favourite disciple of the Buddha, teaches him that even the joys of paradise are vain and nugatory. Nanda is finally convinced and goes to the Buddha to say that he had no longer a desire for the beauties of heaven. The Buddha is greatly pleased and preaches to him in several cantos the cardinals of his doctrine. Nanda now retires into the forest, practises the four great meditations and becomes an arhat. Gratefully he betakes himself to the Buddha and does him reverence but the Master calls upon him now that he has attained his object, out of compassion for others to preach the doctrine of salvation and conduct others to emancipation.

The reference to the forcible conversion of Nanda occurs also in our older sources: Mahāvagga, i. 54; Nidānakathā p. 91; Rhys Davids *Buddhist Birth Series*, p. 128. As is pointed out by Haraprasada Shastri (p. xiii) a strongly divergent version of this legend is to be found in the Pāli commentary on the Dhammapada. See also Spence Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism*; Kern, *History of Buddhism*. i, 155; Foucher, *Greco-Buddhist Art* (i, 464). [36]

### SYNTHESIS OF SCHOOLS

Whilst in the *Buddhacarita* there is no express doctrine emanating from the Mahāyāna school the concluding portion of the *Saundaranandakāvya* already begins to betray a leaning towards the

Mahāyāna. It is not sufficient for it that Nanda himself should become a saint who attains to *Nirvāṇa*. He must also be an apostle of the faith, although it must not be forgotten that even in the Hīnayāna the obligation of the propagation of the faith and proselytism is highly praised, as in a Sūtra in the Aṅguttaranikāya [which one is he thinking of?]. Besides in the third great work of Aśvaghōṣa entitled the *Sūtrālaṃkāra*, which we up to now knew only from a French translation of the Chinese version belonging to about 405 B.C., many of the semi-legendary stories are based on a Hīnayānic foundation.

From this *Sūtrālaṃkāra* translated into French from the Chinese version of Kumārajīva, Huber was able to trace three stories to the Divyāvadāna (*Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient*, 1904, pp. 709-726) but fragments of the Sanskrit original have more recently been discovered at Turfan and studied by Luders in an old palm leaf manuscript (see *Fragments of Buddhist Drama*, Berlin, 1911, and Vallee Poussin *Le Museon*, 1909, p. 86.)

### SŪTRĀLAṂKĀRA

*Sūtrālaṃkāra* or “Sūtra-Ornament” is a collection of pious legends after the model of the Jātakas and Avadānas which are narrated in prose and verse in the style of Indian poetic art. Many of these legends are known to us of old e.g., that of Dīrghāyus or prince Long-Life and of king Śibi. Others already show more of the spirit of the Mahāyāna or at least a reverence for the Buddha which is more Mahāyānistic in its tendency. An illustration is furnished by story No. 57, which happens also to be one of the most charming in the collection. [37]

A man comes to the monastery and desires to be initiated into the Order. The disciple Śāriputra examines him and finds that the candidate in none of his previous existences for aeons had done the smallest good deed and pronounces him unworthy of admittance. The man leaves the monastery in tears. Then the Buddha himself meets him and the Buddha’s heart being full of compassion he strives to convert all mankind with the love that a mother bears to her son. He lays his hand on the head of the rejected one and asks “Why dost thou cry”? And the latter relates to him how Śāriputra had dismissed him. Thereupon the Buddha consoles him “in a voice that resounded like distant thunder” and adds that Śāriputra was not omniscient. The Buddha himself then brings the man back to the monastery and relates before all the monks the *karma*, which was a good act whereby the man had acquired right to emancipation. Once upon a time in his previous birth this person was a poor man who was wandering in a hill forest to collect wood, when a tiger rushed at him. Filled with terror he cried out “adoration to the Buddha”. On account of these words the man must partake of deliverance from sorrow. The Buddha himself initiated him and presently he became an Arhat.

An example of a real Mahāyānistic *Buddha-bhakti* is also furnished by No. 68, where Gautamī, the foster mother of the Buddha, attains to *Nirvāṇa* through the grace of the Buddha.

That the *Sūtrālaṃkāra* is of later origin than the *Buddhacarita* is proved by the fact that the latter is quoted in the former (Huber, page 192, 222). Since in two of the stories of the *Sūtrālaṃkāra* a part is played by king Kaniṣka, Aśvaghōṣa must have lived at the time of the composition of the book as an old man at the court of the king. But it is much to be deplored that up to now we [38] have only Chinese translations of the *Sūtrālaṃkāra*. The Sanskrit text so far has never been discovered. Not only is it in itself a literary work of importance the merits of which impress themselves upon us through two translations, first Chinese and then French, as has been appropriately observed by Levi, but it is not of trifling significance for the history of Indian literature and culture inasmuch as it mentions the epics of the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana, it combats the philosophical doctrine of the Sāṃkhyā and Vaiśeṣika schools just as forcibly as it opposes the religious views of the Brahmans and the Jains and refers in a variety of ways to the

scripts, to the arts and to painting. Still more is uncertainty a matter for regret with reference to a few other books which are attributed to Aśvaghōṣa. It is a question whether they really belong to him. This applies especially to the *Vajrasūci* or Diamond Needle which is in any case an interesting little book in which there is a vehement polemic against the caste system of the Brahmans.

#### VAJRASŪCI : POLEMIC AGAINST CASTE

*The Vajrasūci or refutation of the Arguments upon which the Brahmanical institution of the caste is founded by the learned Buddhist Aśvaghōṣa* (edited by Lancelot Wilkinson) also the *Tunku* by Soobajee Bapoo, *being a reply to the Wujra Soochi*, 1839. A Weber, *Über die Vajrasūci* (*Abhandlungen der Preuss Akademie der Wissenschaften* phil. hist. Kl. 1859, S. 295 ff. und *Indische Streifsn* 1, 116 ff.) B. H. Hodgson *Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*, London 1874, p 126 ff. and S. Levi A. 1908, s 10 t, XII p. 70 f.

Here the author very effectively takes up the Brahmanic standpoint and demonstrates on the authority of Brahmanic texts and citations from the Veda, the Mahābhārata and Manu the invalidity of the claims of caste as recognised by Brahmans. When in 1829 Hodgson published a translation of the books and Wilkinson in 1839 published an edition they astonished scholars by the democratic spirit of Europe displayed in the book. In this tract the doctrine of equality [39] of mankind has been advocated; for all human beings are “in respect of joy and sorrow, love, insight, manners and ways, death, fear and life, all equal.” Did we but know more about the author and the time when the book was composed it would be of much greater importance for the literary history of India on account of the quotations from Brahmanic texts. It speaks for the authorship of Aśvaghōṣa that in Sūtrālamkāra No. 77 the Brahmanic institutions are arraigned with the help of quotations from Manu’s law book just as in the *Vajrasūci*. On the other hand the *Vajrasūci* is enumerated neither in the Tibetan Tanjur nor among the works of Aśvaghōṣa by I-tsing; and further in the Chinese Tripiṭaka Catalogue the *Vajrasūci*, which is said to contain “a refutation of the four vedas,” is described as translated into Chinese between 973 and 981 and is ascribed to a Dharmakīrti (Bunyo Nanjio, Catalogue of the Chinese translation of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka, No. 1303). The Chinese term “fa-shang” is the translation of the Sanskrit proper name Dharmakīrti.

#### OTHER WORKS OF AŚVAGHOṢA

It is altogether undecided whether other books the authorship of which is assigned to Aśvaghōṣa by Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan writers were actually composed by him. The fame of Aśvaghōṣa as a teacher of the Mahāyāna is founded on his Mahāyāna Śraddhotpada or the Rise of the Mahāyāna Faith, a philosophical treatise studied in the monasteries of Japan as the basis of the Mahāyāna doctrine. “The poet of the *Buddhacarita*,” says Levi “shows him[self] here as a profound metaphysician, as an intrepid reviver of a doctrine which was destined to regenerate Buddhism.” However it is anything but certain or rather highly improbable that it is in reality the product of Aśvaghōṣa since it embodies teaching which is assignable to a later date. So long, however, as the Sanskrit [40] text of the book is denied us a final judgment regarding the age of the author is impossible.

The Śraddhotpada was translated first in 534 and then in 710 A.D. into Chinese. From the second Chinese translation T. Suzuki prepared an English version, “Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna.” Suzuki holds Aśvaghōṣa the poet to be the author and asserts on the basis of the book itself, the Mahāyāna Śraddhotpada, that he was the actual founder of the Mahāyāna sect. The doctrine which the book incorporates is, however, that of Vijñānavāda as taught by Asaṅga and the teaching of Tathāgatagarbha and the Tathatā which occurs in Laṅkāvatāra. Professor Takakusu, who holds the authorship of the poet Aśvaghōṣa as altogether out of question, says that the older

catalogue of the Chinese texts does not contain the name of Aśvaghōṣa as the author. In the Tibetan Tanjur Aśvaghōṣa is also described as the composer of the Śatapañcāśatikastotra, the panegyric in 150 verses, which according to I-tsing, is the work of the poet Māṭṛceta. In fact I-tsing cannot say too much regarding the renown of this Māṭṛceta, who at all events belongs to the same school as Aśvaghōṣa and is accordingly confused with him.

### MĀṬṚCETA

To follow the Tibetan historian Taranātha, Māṭṛceta is only another name of Aśvaghōṣa, (F.W., Thomas *Orientalistenkongresse* XIII, 1902, p. 40). One dare not decide whether our Māṭṛceta is identical with the Māṭṛceta, the Author of the Mahārājakanikalekha, (Thomas Ind. Ant., 1903, p. 345 ff. and S. C. Vidyabhushana *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1910, p. 477 ff.) “It is entrancing,” says I-tsing, “in the congregation of the monks to hear recited the hymn in 150 verses or the hymn in 400 verses. These fascinating poems are like heavenly flowers in their [41] beauty and the exalted principles which they contain emulate in dignity the height of mountain summits. Therefore all the composers of hymns in India imitate his style regarding him as the father of literature. Even men like the Bodhisattva Aśaṅga and Vaśubandhu greatly admire him. Throughout India every monk, as soon as he is able to recite the five or ten commandments, learns the psalms of Māṭṛceta.”

The legend would have it that in a previous birth he was a nightingale which eulogised the Buddha in charming melody. I-tsing himself translated from Sanskrit into Chinese the hymn of 150 verses (*Record*, p. 156, 666). Now, however, most fortunately we have discovered in Central Asia fragments of the Sanskrit originals of the hymns of Māṭṛceta and from the mutilated manuscripts discovered at Turfan, to which we already owe so much, Siegling has succeeded in reconstructing almost two-thirds of the text. The verses are in the artistic, but not the extravagant *Kāvya*, style. Besides Dr. Siegling who has been preparing an edition for the press similar fragments discovered in Central Asia have been published by Levi (*Journale Asiatique* 1910, page 455, and Vallee Poussin 1911, page 764) F. W. Thomas translated one of the Māṭṛceta’s poems the Varṇanārthavarṇanā, from the Tibetan rendering into English (Ind. Ant. vol. 34, p. 145).

### BUDDHIST POET ŚŪRA

Better known is the poet Śūra or Āryaśūra, probably issuing from the same school, although of a considerably younger date whose Jātakamālā strongly resembles the Sūtrālamkāra in style. The Jātakamālā or the Garland of Jātakas is, however, only the name of a species of composition. Several poets have written *jātakamālās* that is, they have treated with a free hand in an original poetic speech in mixed verse and prose selections of the Jātakas. It was also not Āryaśūra’s business to discover [42] new stories but to reproduce ancient legends in artistic and elegant idiom. His diction in prose as well as verse is of the *kāvya* class, but noble and elevated, more artistic than artificial.

So far as the *jātakas* are designed to be employed by the monks in their sermons, the Jātakamālā also serves this purpose for the preacher. Only the poet who was probably himself a preacher at the court, has none but monks before his eyes, who held their religious discourses in courtly circles where Sanskrit poesy was understood and appreciated. The book contains 34 *jātakas* which, like the 35 *jātakas* of the Pāḷi Cariyapiṭakā illustrate the *Pāramitās* or the excellences of the Bodhisattva. Nearly all the stories appear also in the Pāḷi Book of Jātaka and twelve are to be found likewise in the Cariyapiṭaka. Many of the Sanskrit verses harmonise with the Pāḷi *jātakas*. (See Speyer’s translation, p. 337.) To the few stories which are wanting in the Pāḷi collection belongs the first in which is related how the Bodhisattva sees a hungry tigress about to devour its young and sacrifices himself to be her nourishment. It is a highly characteristic story and may be

reproduced here as an example of the anecdotal literature designed to convey the Mahāyāna doctrine of universal compassion.

### MASTER'S SELFLESS LOVE

This most characteristic story runs as follows:- “Already in his earlier births the Master displayed a selfless love for all creatures and allowed himself to be absorbed into other beings. Therefore must men cherish for the Buddha, the Lord, supreme attachment. For the following miracle on the part of the Lord in one of his previous births is recounted - a deed which was celebrated by my venerable teacher one of the adorers of Three Jewels who gave satisfaction to his preceptor by his insight and truth and became himself an eminent master in the search for virtue. [43]

In those days the Bodhisattva, who is now the Lord, in keeping with his extraordinary promises by virtue of his charity, love, succour to the poor conferred grace on the world out of compassion issuing from the immaculate stream of insight and love was born in a Brahman family devoted to their duties and pre-eminent for character, learned and powerful.” As he grew up he presently acquired mastery over all the arts and sciences. He obtained much wealth and honour. However he found no pleasure in worldly life and soon withdrew into retirement. As a pious ascetic he lived in the forest. One day he was wandering accompanied by a single disciple in the mountains. He saw in a cave a young tigress exhausted with hunger and about to devour her own young, trustfully approaching her to feed on her milk.

“As the Bodhisattva saw her  
Trembled he, brave as he was,  
Filled with compassion for the sorrow of the nearest,  
Like the prince of mountains in an earthquake.  
How strange! The compassionate remain intrepid even under great personal grief.  
But when a stranger is smitten, however small, they quail.”

He sent out his disciple to fetch meat. But this was only a pretext in order to be left alone. He was already determined to hurl himself down the precipice in order to save the life of the creature and to serve as food to the mother tiger. He based his resolve on this that this futile earthly life has no value except as an offering for others. Moreover, he would give a heartening example unto those who would benefit the world, put to shame the self-seekers, [44] point the path of heaven to the benevolent and himself attain to supreme illumination. Nothing else he desired:- “Not out of covetousness, nor in search of renown, nor joys of Heaven or kingly rule to acquire; not for the sake of my eternal weal; but only to do good to my neighbour, do I act thus. As surely as this is truth, so may it be granted unto me to remove the tribulation of the world and to bring salvation to it, even as the sun brings it light when darkness swallows it up.”

With these words he hurls himself down the cliff. The tigress has her attention called by the noise, leaves her young, and throws herself upon the body of the Bodhisattva to devour it. When the disciple comes back and beholds the spectacle, he is profoundly moved and utters a few verses of veneration for the exalted Master. Men, demi-gods, and gods express their admiration for the Lord by strewing garlands of flowers and precious stones over what is left of his bones.

The inexhaustible sympathy of the Bodhisattva has also been glorified in most other stories. I-tsing extols the Jātakamālā or Jātakamālās among the works which in his time were great favourites and were much read in India. Among the frescoes in the caves of Ajanta there are scenes from the Jātakamālā with inscribed stophes from Āryaśūra. The inscriptions belong palaeographically to the sixth century A.D. and since another work of Āryaśūra had already been translated into Chinese in 434, the poet must have lived in the fourth century.

I-tsing, Tr. Takakusu, p.166 f.; H. Luders, *Nachrichten von der K. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen* 1902, p. 758 ff B. Nanjio, Catalogue of the Chinese Tripiṭaka, No. 1349; The Zachariae GGA, 1888, p. 850, F. W. Thomas in Album Kern, p. 405, ff. The Chinese translation of the Jātakamālā mentions Āryaśūra as the author. It has only 14 stories, see Ivanovski in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 1903 V. 47, p. 298 ff. [45]

## CHAPTER 6: AVADĀNA

The Jātakamālā is also called Bodhisattva Avadānamālā, for Bodhisattva Avadāna is synonymous with Jātaka. The Jātakas are consequently nothing but Avadānas having the Bodhisattva for their hero. Consequently works like the Sūtrālamkāra and the Jātakamālā have much in common with the texts of the Avadāna literature. On the other hand numerous Jātakas are to be found in the collections of Avadānas.

On the Avadāna literature in general see Burnouf, *Introduction to the History Of Buddhism*, p. 207; Feer in the introduction to his translation, and Speyer, Foreword to his edition of the Avadānaśataka.

### VENERATION FOR THE BUDDHA

Like both books of Buddhist story literature, the *avadāna* texts also stand, so to say, with one foot in the Hīnayāna and the other in the Mahāyāna literature. And I-tsing (Takakusu, p. xxii f. and 14 f.) lets us know that the line of demarcation between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna was often anything but rigid. The older works belong entirely to the Hīnayāna and yet they display the same veneration for the Buddha which is not wanting likewise in the Pāli *jātakas* and *avadānas*; but they eschew the hyperbole and the mythology of the Mahāyāna, while the latest *avadāna* books are permeated with the Mahāyāna.

### WHAT IS AVADĀNA?

The word *avadāna* signifies a great religious or moral achievement, as well as the history of a great achievement. Such a great act may consist in sacrifice of one's own life, but also may be confined to the founding of an institution for the supply of incense, flowers, gold and jewels to, or the building of, sanctuaries - *stūpas*, *caityas*, and so forth. Since these stories as a rule are designed to inculcate [46] that dark deeds bear dark fruits, white acts beget fair fruit, they are at the same time tales of *karma* which demonstrate how the actions of one life are intimately connected with those in the past or future existences. They are to be regarded as legends only from our modern standpoint. To the Buddhist they are actualities. They have indeed been related by the Buddha himself and are warranted to be the words of the Buddha - *Buddhavacana* - like a *Sūtra*.

Like the *jātakas* the *avadānas* also are a species of sermons. It is accordingly usually related by way of an introduction where and on what occasion the Buddha narrated the story of the past and at the close the Buddha draws from the story the moral of his doctrine. Hence a regular *avadāna* consists of a story of the present, a story of the past and a moral. If the hero of the story of the past is a Bodhisattva the *avadāna* can also be designated a *jātaka*.

A particular species of *avadānas* are those in which the Buddha instead of a story of the past relates a prognostication of the future. These prophetic anecdotes serve like the stories of the past to explain the present *karma*. There are besides *avadānas* in which both the parties of the stories are united and finally there is a class in which a *karma* shows good or evil consequence in the present existence. All these species of *avadānas* occur sporadically also in the Vinaya and the Sūtra piṭakas. They however, are grouped in large collections with the object of edification or for more ambitious literary motives. A work of the first variety is the Avadānaśataka which is most probably the most ancient of its kind. It is a collection of a hundred *avadāna* legends. Since it was already rendered into Chinese in the first half of the 3rd century and since it makes mention of the *dinara* we may with tolerable certainty assign it to the second Christian century. That it belongs to the Hīnayāna is indicated already by the character [47] of the anecdotes; but this is likewise corroborated by the circumstances that in the stories relating to the present there are fragments embodied from the Sanskrit canon of the Sārvāṣṭivādis relating to the Parinirvāṇa and other

*sūtras*. In these legends the worship of the Buddha plays a great part. There is no trace in them, however, of the Bodhisattva cult or of any Mahāyānistic mythology.

### AVADĀNAŚĀTAKA

The Avadānaśataka consists of ten decades, each treating of a different theme. The first four contain stories designed to show the nature of acts, the performance of which enables a man to become a Buddha or a Pratyeka Buddha. The division into *vargas* (Pāli: *vagga*) of ten components each is a favourite with Pāli texts and accordingly would appear to date from the older Buddhist period. All the tales of the first and nearly all of the third decade are of a prophetic nature.

Here an act of piety is related by which a person - a Brahman, a princess, the son of an usurer, a wealthy merchant, a gardener, a king, a ferry man, a young maiden and so forth - makes adoration to the Buddha which usually leads to the occurrence of some kind of miracle, and then the Buddha with a smile reveals that the particular person in a future age will become a Buddha or (in the Third book) a Pratyeka Buddha. On the other hand the histories in the Second and in the Fourth decades are Jātakas. With regard to the saintly virtues and astounding acts, it is explained that the hero of these tales was no other than the Buddha himself in one of his earlier births.

A kind of Pretavastu, corresponding to the Pāli Petavatthu, is represented by the Fifth book. A saint - usually it is Maudgalyayāna - proceeds to the world of spirits and observes the sorrows of one of its denizens, (*pretas*) male or [48] female. He questions the spirit regarding the cause of his tribulation. The spirit refers him to the Buddha, and the latter then narrates the history of the "black deed" - the refusal to give alms, offence to a saint, etc. - which this creature perpetrated in his previous birth.

The Sixth book relates histories of men and beasts that through some pious act are born as deities in heaven. The last four decades narrate stories purporting to show the nature of acts which lead to Arhatship. The Arhats of the Seventh book are all derived from the Śākya clan; those of the Eighth book are all women; those of the Ninth are persons of irreproachable conduct; and those of the Tenth are men who in former days committed evil deeds and suffered in consequence and subsequently owing to an act of virtue attained to the state of an Arhat.

### THE FIXED MODEL

Now these stories in our collection have not only been arranged after a definite plan and system, but are related according to a set model. This process of working according to a pattern is carried to the extent of perpetual reiteration of phrases and descriptions of situations in unaltered strings of words. Thus following the rigid pattern every one of our tales begins with the protracted formula:

“The Buddha, the Lord, venerated, highly respected, held in honour, and lauded by kings, ministers, men of wealth, citizens, artisans, leaders of caravans, Devas, Nāgas, Yakṣas, Asuras, Garuḍas. Kinnaras and gigantic snakes, adored by Devas, Nāgas, Yakṣas, Asuras, Garuḍas, Kinnaras and gigantic snakes, the Buddha, the Lord, the Renowned, the Served, betook himself, accompanied by his disciples and provided with all the necessaries in clothing, food, bedding, covering, refreshments and medicaments in the shape of alms to .... and was sojourning at .... ” [49]

Similarly everyone of these tales ends with:

“Thus spake the Lord and with ecstasy in their hearts the monks applauded the speech of the Master.”

Finally when the moral of the story is pointed out the process is invariably described in these words:

“Therefore, oh monks, is the fruit of wholly dark deeds wholly dark; that of wholly white deeds is wholly white; that of mixed deeds is mixed, wherefore, oh monks, you shall abandon the dark and the mixed deeds and take your pleasure only in fair acts.”

### CULTURE EVIDENCES

A pious man, an opulent personage, a mighty sovereign, a happy wedding, the up-bringing of a young man, the appearance of an earlier Buddha and similar recurring phenomena are ever described in stereotyped terms. Nor is this applicable only to a few brief sentences. It holds good for extensive pieces covering several pages of print. One of the longest of these fixture pieces describes the smile of the Buddha with which the latter lays down that every one can attain to the state of a Buddha. The Buddha always is moved to a smile before he prophesies the future. When he smiles from his mouth issue rays of blue, yellow, red and white. One of these beams of light go down to the depths of inferno the others are darted heavenwards. After encircling thousands and thousands of worlds they return back to the Buddha and disappear into some one or the other of the parts of the Buddha’s body according to the nature of the vaticination; and all this is delineated to the minutest particular. This circumstantiality and the minutiae are characteristic of the narrative mode of the Avadānaśataka. However together with much that is banal and wearisome we always get edifying stories and many valuable anecdotes and noteworthy variants to other stories accessible to us from other portions of Buddhist narrative literature. [50] We can cite only a few examples in order to give an idea of the character of this remarkable collection of Buddhist folklore. Here are some characteristic stories in which the true social life of India is mirrored.

### MAIDEN DISCIPLE: STORY 28

A poor girl smears the feet of the Buddha with sandal paste. This fills the whole city with the fragrance of sandal. At this miracle the maiden is exceedingly delighted, falls at the feet of the Buddha and prays that in her future birth she may be born a *Pratyeka-Buddha*. The Buddha smiles and prophesies that she shall be a *Pratyeka-Buddha* named Gandhamadana (Fragrance-Delight).

### EXTREME COMPASSION: STORY 34

This story is a version of the tale of King Śibi who has given away all his goods and possessions in charity. He, however, is not content with merely making men happy; he would show kindness to the smallest creature. He cuts off his skin with a knife and exposes himself in such a manner that flies feast on his blood. This is seen by Śakra (Indra) in his heaven and he comes forward to put king Śibi to a further test, appearing before him in the form of a vulture ready to pounce upon him. The king looks at the bird only with benevolence and says, “Take, my friend, what you like of my body; I present it to you.” Thereupon the god metamorphoses himself into a Brahman and asks of the king both his eyes. Śibi says “Take, Great Brahman, what thou wouldst; I will not hinder thee.” Next Śakra reassumes his true form and promises to Śibi that he shall attain to perfect enlightenment.

### DISINTERESTED PITY: STORY 36

This is the legend of Maitrakanyaka representing the Sanskrit version of the Pāli Jātaka of “Mittavindaka”. But the story here takes quite a different turn from the Pāli in as much as the hero is the Bodhisattva. He gets here also his penalty for offending his mother and [51] undergoes the hot wheel torture. But while he is subjected to the fearful torment he is informed that he will

have to suffer it for sixty-six thousand years till another man guilty of a similar sin appears. He feels compassion for the creature and resolves to bear the wheel on his head for all eternity so that no other being may have to endure the agony. In consequence of this thought of compassion the wheel disappears from on his head.

#### PRINCESS DEVOUT: STORY 54

At the suggestion of his princess, king Bimbisāra set up a *Stūpa* in his seraglio over some hair and nails presented to him by the Buddha. The *Stūpa* was worshipped by the women with incense, lamps, flowers, etc. But when prince Ajātaśatru assassinated his father Bimbisāra and himself ascended the throne, he gave strict orders that no lady of his harem should, on pain of death, venerate the shrine. Śrīmatī, however, who was one of the ladies in the harem, did not obey the command and laid a garland of lights round the *Stūpa*. The infuriated king put her to death. She died with the thought of the Buddha in her mind and was immediately translated to heaven as a divinity.

#### GUERDON OF SERVICE TO BUDDHA: STORY 100

While the heroes of all the Avadānas are the Buddha's contemporaries, the hero of this last story is a person who lived in the times of king Aśoka. The connection with the time of the Buddha is established by the insertion of an account of the decease of the Buddha. This narrative piece is extracted from a Parinirvāṇasūtra and is in tolerable accord with the celebrated Pāḷi Mahāparinibbānasutta (another passage from the Parinirvāṇasūtra serves as an introduction to Story No. 40).

A hundred years after the passing of the Buddha lived king Aśoka. He had a son named Kuṇāla who was so [52] charming that the king thought he had no equal in the world. One day, however, he learnt from merchants from Gandhāra that there were still more handsome young men than the prince in their country. According to the merchants there was living a youth called Sundara who was not only of irreproachable beauty, but wherever he turned, there sprang up a lotus-pond and a garden. The astonished king Aśoka sent a messenger and invited Sundara and satisfied himself about this wonder. The king asked to what *karma* the youth owed his excellence and the Elder Upagupta gave the explanation. At the time that the Buddha had just attained to complete *Nirvāṇa* the present Sundara was an impoverished peasant who prepared a refreshing bath and revived with food Mahakāśyapa and his suite of 500 monks who had performed the obsequies of the Master, who were depressed with sorrow at the passing of the Lord and who had been exhausted with the long journey. Sundara was now enjoying the fruit of this his good deed.

#### AVADĀNAŚĀTAKA AND COGNATE TALES

A number of the stories in our Avadānaśātaka turn up in other Avadāna anthologies and a few also in the Pāḷi Apadānas. Thus the legend of Raṣṭrapāla which is No. 90 in our collection corresponds partly to the Raṭṭhapālasutta of the Pāḷi Majjhimanikāya and partly the Raṭṭhapāla Apadāna. But the correspondence stops short of the titles in the Sanskrit and the Pāḷi and the Pāḷi Apadāna displays great divergence (Feer, Avadānaśātaka, pp. 240 f., 313 f., 335, 340 ff., 354 f., 360 f., 372 f, 439 f.)

#### TIBETAN AND CHINESE ANALOGUES

An old work which bears a great resemblance to Avadānaśātaka and has a number of stories in common with it is the *Karmaśātaka* or Hundred *Karma* Stories. This work, however, is unfortunately preserved to us only in a Tibetan translation (Feer pp. XXIX f., 442 ff; V. V, 382 ff., 404 ff. and *Journale Asiatique* 1901 V. [53] XVII, pp. 50 ff., 257 ff., 410 ff.; Speyer p. XIX f.).

Translated from Sanskrit but no longer preserved in the original language is also the Tibetan collection of Avadānas now celebrated in the literature of the world as the story book of Dsanglun under the title of The Wise Man and the Fool. It has been translated into German by J. Schmidt. Takakusu points to a Chinese version of this work (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1901, p. 447 ff.).

### DIVYĀVADĀNA

A collection younger than the Avadānaśataka but one which has incorporated in it exceedingly old texts is the Divyāvadāna or the Divine Avadāna. The original Sanskrit has been edited by Cowell and Neil of Cambridge. Large extracts from it had already been translated by Burnouf (Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism). The title of the work is not certain; it is only found in the chapter headings of some manuscripts. Rajendralal Mitra described a manuscript entitled Divyāvadānamālā which greatly deviates from our printed edition (Nepalese Buddhist Literature, pp. 304-316). Also a Paris manuscript which is described in the Cambridge edition (p. 663 ff.) harmonizes only partially with our Divyāvadāna.

### CHARACTERISTICS

This collection of stories, of great importance for the history of Indian sociology, begins with the Mahāyānistic benediction, “Oh, reverence to all the exalted Buddhas and Bodhisattvas” and contains a few obviously later accretions in the Mahāyānistic sense. As a whole, however, the book decidedly belongs to the Hīnayāna school. As the example of the Mahāyānistic interpolation we may mention chapter XXXIV which is noted in the collection itself as a Mahāyānasūtra (p. 483). In chapter XXX there occurs the *ṣadākṣaravidya* or the well-known Tibetan formula of [54] *om mani padme hum* (Poussin, Boudhisme p. 381). The Sanskrit canon of Buddhism is repeatedly mentioned and individual canonic texts are quoted such as Dīrghāgama, Udāna, Sthaviragāthā (Oldenberg, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 52,1891, pp. 653, 655 f., 658, 665). It mentions the four Āgamas (p. 333). Many of the stories commence and terminate exactly as in the Avadānaśataka. And finally a number of stereotyped phrases and descriptions, so characteristic, appear again in self-same words in the Divyāvadāna. In all probability they are derived from the common source - the Vinayapiṭaka of the Sārvāṣṭivādīs. As a matter of fact, more than half of the anecdotes have been borrowed from the latter but several have been loans from the Sūtrālaṃkāra of Aśvaghōṣa which we discussed above (Huber *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient* IV, 1904, 709 ff.; VI, 1906, 1 ff.; Sylvain Levi T'oung Pao, V.VII, 1907, 105 ff., and Speyer Avadānaśataka II, preface p. XVI f.).

### ANALYSIS OF COMPONENTS

The Divyāvadāna is composed of very varied materials. It has no principle of division, nor is it uniform with regard to language and style. Most of the legends are written in good simple Sanskrit prose which is only here and there interrupted by *gāthās*. But in some passages we find also elaborate poetry of genuine *Kāvya* style with long compounds. The editor of this collection of legends appears, therefore, to have simply pieced together a variety of stories from other texts. From this also follows that the several component elements of the work are assignable to different periods of time. If our collection, as has been alleged, was already translated into Chinese in the third Christian century it could not have been published in the original long before that date. At the same time we have to bear in mind that because some of the Avadānas in the Divyāvadāna were translated into Chinese in the third century (Cowell Neil, p. 655.), therefore it does not necessarily follow that the work as a whole was rendered into Chinese (Kern Manual, p. 10; Barth, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 889, V. 19, p. 260). Not only there is the mention of the successors of Aśoka, the kings of the Śuṅga dynasty down to the [55] Puśyamitra (178 B.C.) but there is the repeated occurrence of the *dinara*, which brings us down to the second century. And

some period after Aśvaghōṣa must have elapsed before a compiler could take extracts from his Sūtrālaṃkāra for his own anthology. The Divyāvadāna, therefore, was redacted rather in the third than in the second century. Nevertheless it is remarkable that just one of the most interesting legends in the Divyāvadāna, the story of Śārdūlakarṇa, was translated into Chinese in 265 A.D. The contents of this Avadāna noteworthy in many respects, are as follows:-

### ŚĀRDŪLAKARṆA: LOVE OF THE UNTOUCHABLE

The Master was sojourning in Śrāvastī and Ānanda was wont daily to repair to the town on his begging round. Once upon a time, as he was returning from the town, he became thirsty and [met] a *caṇḍāla* maiden, named Parakṛti, fetching water from a well. “Sister,” said he to her, “give me some water to drink.” Parakṛti replied, “I am a *caṇḍāla* girl, revered Ānanda.” “Sister,” said Ānanda, “I do not ask you about your family and your caste, but if you have any water left, give it to me and I will drink.” (Note that so far the similarity with Jesus and the Samariitan woman is surprising, John 4, 7 ff., but the whole course of the narrative further down in the Gospel is so different that we can scarcely think of any connection between the Buddhist and Christian Scriptures). The maiden hands him the water to drink and falls deep in love with the Saint. She tells her mother that she will die or have Ānanda for her husband. The mother, who was a powerful witch, prepared a potent philtre and attempted her sorcery on Ānanda with mantras. The process is described in a way similar to the incantation in the Kauśikasūtra of the Atharvaveda. The charm is successful. Ānanda comes into the house of the *caṇḍāla* where the joyful Prakṛti [56] has prepared a bed. But in the moment of supreme danger, Ānanda breaks out into tears and supplicates the Buddha in his distress. The latter hastens to his succour with his own counter mantras. Ānanda leaves the *caṇḍāla* home and returns to his monastery. The great witch declares to her unfortunate daughter that the necromancy of Gautama is superior to her own. But Prakṛti, the *caṇḍāla* maiden, was yet not cured of her love. She went into the town and followed Ānanda day after day as he went forth on his mendicant’s circuit. Once more Ānanda in his sorrow turned to the Master for help. The latter summoned Prakṛti to himself and ostensibly consented to her desire that Ānanda should be her husband. Soon, however, he brings her to a frame of mind in which she takes the vow of spinsterly chastity and turns a nun. She not only has her hair shaven and dons the nun’s weeds, but dives into the profundity of the four Noble Truths and understands the religion of the Buddha in its entirety.

When, however, the Brahmans, warriors and citizens of Śrāvastī heard that the Buddha made a *caṇḍāla* daughter a nun, they were greatly perturbed, conveyed it to the king Praśenajit and the latter immediately set out for the Master to remonstrate with him. Numerous Brahmans, warriors and citizens of Śrāvastī had gathered together there. Then the Buddha related the story of Triśanku, the *caṇḍāla* chieftain. The latter, ages ago, was desirous of matching his learned son Śārdūlakarṇa to the daughter of the proud Brahman Puśkārasāri. The Brahman rejected his overtures with disdain and now follows a most interesting dialogue in which Triśanku subjects to searching criticism the caste system and the Brahmanic code of morality. He demonstrates that between members of the various castes there exists no such natural difference as between diverse species of animals and plants. Moreover there could be no [57] caste according to the doctrines of transmigration and the theory of *karma* in as much as each individually is reborn in accordance with his own deeds. Finally, Puśkārasāri is convinced of the erudition of Triśanku and consents to the marriage. And, concludes the Master, the Brahman’s daughter was in a former birth no other than the *caṇḍāla* spinster Prakṛti. The Buddha himself was in that age Triśanku; and who else could be Śārdūlakarṇa, but Ānanda.

This beautiful legend of the Buddhists was known to Richard Wagner by means of the French translation of Burnouf (Introduction p. 205 ff.) and upon it he has based his “Victors.”

### AŚOKĀVADĀNA

Old because already translated into Chinese in the third Christian century is also the cycle of stories called the Aśokāvadāna incorporated with the Divyāvadāna (XXVIXXIX). The central figure of the tales is the great king Aśoka. Historically these legends contain hardly anything of moment. But the important exceptions are, first, the mention of the persecution of Jainism (p. 427); and secondly the intolerance of Buddhist monks under Puśyamiṭra (p. 433 f.). Rhys Davids has studied these allusions (*Journal of the Pali Text Society* 1896, p. 88 f.). The tales are more valuable from the literary standpoint. First of all here we have the extraordinary dramatic legend of Upagupta and Māra. It is an unusually bold idea to have Māra the Evil One, the Tempter, converted by a Buddhist monk. Still bolder it is when saint Upagupta, who longs for a vision of the Buddha, who had passed for centuries into *Nirvāṇa*, implores his proselyte Māra to appear to him in the garb of the Buddha and the latter, like an experienced actor, so thoroughly personates the Buddha that the holy man sinks in obeisance before him. So dramatically conceived is the whole story that one can well believe that here simply a Buddhist drama is recapitulated. In language, style and metre the piece belongs to the art of court poetry. We are not therefore at all surprised that, as has been proved by Huber, the compiler of the [58] Divyāvadāna has extracted in its literal entirety this magnificent section from the Sūtrālaṅkāra of Aśvaghōṣa.

Divyāvadāna pp. 356-364, translated by Wintlich, *Māra und Buddha*, p. 161 ff, Huber Ashvagoshā: Sūtrālaṅkāra translated into French, p. 263 ff, and *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient* 4, 1904, p. 709 ff.

A Pāli version of this legend quite artless and undramatic has been discovered from the Burmese book of *Lokapaññatti* by Duroiselle (*Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient*, 4 1904, p. 414 ff.). It is remarkable that the monastery in which Upagupta (who subsequently became the preceptor of Aśoka) lived, was founded by the brothers Nāṭa (actor) and Bhaṭa (soldier) and was accordingly called Nāṭabhaṭika. Not inappropriately Levi calls the Aśokāvadāna a kind Māhātmya of the Nāṭabhaṭika Monastery at Mathura.

### KUṆĀLA : QUEEN MOTHER AND STEP-SON

The source of one of the most charming legends in the Aśoka cycle of tales in the Divyāvadāna remains unknown. It is the pathetic episode of Kuṇāla. He was the son of King Aśoka, and at the instigation of his wicked step-mother was blinded of his eyes of wonderful beauty. Not for a moment did he feel indignation or hatred against her who was the cause of so much misery to himself.

### PĀLI PARALLELS

The Divyāvadāna has many legends in common with the Pāli canon. The seventh chapter is an extract from the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra. To a well-known Pāli sūtra or dialogue corresponds the history of Pūrṇa who goes out as an apostle to the wild and violent Śroṇaparantakas, determined to bear with equanimity and gentleness their invectives, assaults and attempts at murder (Divyāvadāna p. 36ff.).

Samyuttanikāya IV p. 60; Majjhimanikāya III, 267; *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 1887, p. 23 Pāli jātaṅka No.4 answers to Divyāvadāna, p. 498 ff., the story being that of the young merchant's son who sells a dead rat and gradually acquires enormous wealth. [59]

### RŪPAVATĪ SACRIFICE

The Rūpavatī-avadāna, thirty-second in our collection reminds us rather of the legends in the Jātakamālā. The heroine cuts off her breast to feed with her flesh and blood a starving woman

who was about to eat up her child. In her, however, we see the Mahāyāna ideal of a Bodhisattva who when questioned as to the motive of her behaviour, replies:-

“Verily I sacrifice my breast for the sake of the child not that I may get kingdom or joys, not for heaven, not to become Indra, not to reign supreme over the world as its sole sovereign, but for no reason except that I may attain to supreme, complete, enlightenment in order that I may, domesticate the untamed, liberate those that are not free, console those that are disconsolate and that I may conduct to complete *Nirvāṇa* the unemancipated. As true as this resolve of mine is, may my womanly sex vanish and may I become a man.”

No sooner did she utter these words than she was transformed into a prince of Rūpavata who afterwards became king and reigned for 60 years.

In the same *Kāvya* style as the Jātakamālā there is the legend which is an artistic elaboration of the Maitrakanyaka Avadāna in accordance with the tradition of the Avadānaśataka of which it is the thirty-sixth story. In our Divyāvadāna it is the thirty-eighth. Extracts of this nature brings the collection of Divyāvadāna in harmony with the ordinary category of the Avadānamālā literature.

#### KALPADRUMĀVADĀNAMĀLĀ

Poetic elaboration of *avadāna* stories drawn partly from the Avadānaśataka and partly from other sources is represented by the Kalpadrumāvadānamālā or the “Wishtree-*avadāna*-garland,” that is, a garland of *avadānas* which procures all desires; by the Ratnāvadānamālā or the “Precious stone *avadāna*-garlands;” and by the Aśokavadānamālā, or the “Avadāna garland of king Aśoka.” [60]

Feer p. xxiii ff.; Speyer p. xii ff, xxi ff.; Raj. Mitra *Nepalese Buddhist Literature*, pp. 6 ff. 197 ff., 292 ff. ; Bendall, *Catalogue* p. 110 ff. A legend from the Ratnāvadānamālā is translated by Mahendra Lal Das in the journal of the Buddhist Text Society, 1894, part 3.

#### UNEQUIVOCAL MAHĀYĀNISM

The Kalpadrumāvadānamālā begins with an elaboration of the last story in the Avadānaśataka. And just as in the latter the elder Upagupta appears carrying on a dialogue with king Aśoka so all the legends in these Avadānamālās have been shaped in the form of conversations between Aśoka and Upagupta. The Aśokavadānamālā in its first part contains legends of Aśoka himself, then only follow religious instruction in the shape of historical narratives related by Upagupta to Aśoka. Now all these three collections differ from the Avadānaśataka not only in the circumstance that they have been cast entirely in epic ślokas, but especially in that they belong unequivocally to the Mahāyāna and in language and style remind one of the Purāṇas. Besides, they must belong also to the period which gave birth to the sectarian Purāṇas. It may be noted that as has been shown by Waddell (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* proceedings, 1899, p. 70 ff.) Upagupta is only another name of Tissa Moggaliputta, the preceptor of Aśoka. He is also a well-known celebrity in Pāli literature.

Another collection which has liberally drawn upon the Avadānaśataka is the Dvaviṃśatyāvadāna or the Avadāna of the Twenty-two Sections. Here also Upagupta is represented as holding dialogues with Aśoka, but they soon disappear from the stage and their place is occupied by Śākyamuni and Maitreya, the Buddha of the present period and the Buddha to come. But the legends here are related in prose and have been divided into sections in accordance with the morals inculcated by each. They deal with “acts of merit,” “listening to sermons,” “liberality,” and so forth.

The [61] Bhadrakalpāvadāna is a collection of thirty-four legends which Upagupta relates to Aśoka. Its title connects the *avadānas* with the age of virtue. It is similar to the Avadānamālās in that it is entirely in verse. But in plan and contents it bears a resemblance to the Mahāvagga of the Pāli Vinayapiṭaka.

Bendall Catalogue, p. 88 ff.; Feer xxix; Raj. Mitra. p.42 ff.; Speyer xxxvi.

According to S. d'Oldenburg who has translated the thirty-fourth story which is another version of jātakamālā 31, corresponding to the Pāli *jātaka* No. 537 (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1892, p. 331 ff.) the Bhadra is of a later date than Kṣemendra who flourished about 1040 A.D.

#### MISCELLANEOUS AVADĀNAS.

Just as in the sectarian Purāṇas there are extensive chapters and sometimes entire independent works which are technically called Māhātmyas, of legendary import and generally invented to explain the origin of a festival or rite (*vrata*), so also we have a corresponding category of Buddhist texts. A collection of such legends is the *Vratāvadānamāla* or “Garland of *avadānas* on fasts and rites” which has nothing in common with the Avadāna collection mentioned above except that it has the same framework - dialogues between Upagupta and Aśoka.

Raj. Mitra, pp. 102 ff., 22 ff., 231, 275 ff. Other texts of the same class are at pp. 229 f., 232 f., 265 ff., 269 ff., 280 ff., L. Feer, *Suvarṇavaraṇa avadānam et Vratāvadānamālā* xii, Rome, 1899 f, p. 19 ff.

These are obviously very late Mahāyāna texts. A collection of a most variegated nature is the Vicitrakarṇikāvadāna which has thirty-two stories, some of them derived from the Avadānaśataka and others appertaining to the type of the Vratāvadāna. Mixed like the contents is also the language being now a barbarous Sanskrit, now Sanskrit verse, again Pāli and so forth. (Speyer, pp. xciii-c.) All these books are up to now only known in manuscript. But there are others which are accessible to us though only in their Tibetan and Chinese translations. [62]

#### AVADĀNAS IN CHINESE AND TIBETAN

As regards *avadāna* collections in Chinese (see Feer xxx) the *Contes et Apologues Indiens* of Stanislas Julien, Paris, 1860, translated into German by Schnell, 1903, are of Chinese origin, ultimately going back to Sanskrit prime texts. But in our collections of manuscripts and in Chinese and Tibetan translations we have preserved to us not only anthologies of *avadānas*, but also several individual *avadānas* of extensive compass. For instance, the Sumāgadhāvadāna, represents the legends of Sumāgadha, the daughter of the famous merchant Anāthapiṇḍada, who creates an aversion for the Jains in her husband and by a miracle converts the whole city to the religion of the Buddha. In one of her former births she was the daughter of the celebrated king Kṛki, associated in legends with his wonderful dreams. These dreams have a wider significance than as affecting Sanskrit or even Buddhist literature. They belong to the literature of the world (See Jātaka No. 77 and S. d'Oldenburg in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* p. 509 ff., and Tsuru-Matsu Tokiwai *Studies in Sumāgadhāvadāna*, Dissertation for the University of Strassburg, 1889; Raj. Mitra, p. 237.) It is remarkable that the same *avadāna* is quoted from a Vinaya text in the *Abhidharmakośa Vyākhyā* of Yaśomitra. Finally, we have to make particular mention of the ponderous corpus of *avadānas* by the great Kashmirian Buddhist poet Kṣemendra, who flourished about 1040 A.D. His work the Avadāna-Kalpalatā enjoys high reputation in Tibet.

The text with the Tibetan translation is edited in the Bibliotheca Indica series by Sarat Chandra Das and Hari Mohan Vidyabhushana. Kṣemendra is a prolific writer and versifier of almost astounding fertility. We shall come across him more than once later on because he has occupied

himself with various provinces of literature. However, he [63] distinguished himself less by his genius and taste than by his iron assiduity. The great mass of legends into which Kṣemendra works the Buddhist Avadānas in the style of the elegant poetry is more didactic than spiritual as regards the tales which he selects. The Buddhist propensity to self-sacrifice has been carried here to such refinement and to such a pitch and the doctrine of *karma* has been inculcated with such extravagance and above all the moral is so thickly strewn over that it often overshoots the mark. The collection consists of 107 legends to which Somendra, the son of Kṣemendra, added, besides an introduction, the one hundred and eighth tale of Jīmūtavahāna. All these legends are mostly known to us either from other Avadāna anthologies or otherwise. The Padmavatī Avadāna, for instance, is the story of Padmavatī familiar to us in the Pāli commentaries. The Ekaśṛṅga Avadāna is the Ṛṣyaśṛṅga legend so well known to us. They both occur also in the Mahāvastu (*Nachrichten von der K. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen*, 1901 p. 26) and Luders has shown that Kṣemendra has worked up this legend after the Mahāvastu. The version by Kṣemendra of this story has been reproduced in German verse by H. Francke.