

Buddhakhetta and Buddhāpadāna

by Mr. Dwijendralal Barua, M.A.



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[Editor's Note: the original of this essay and translation appeared in an obscure Volume in Honour of B.C. Law that was published by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Poona, India in 1946. It has seemed so valuable to me that I have ventured to reproduce it. I have been unable to trace the copyright holders, but if someone is claiming copyright and doesn't want it published here I will take it down immediately.]

For the electronic publication I have made a few small changes to the printed text as noted here: original page numbers are printed in square brackets; sometimes words have been added in square brackets to either complete the sense, or add information I judge to be relevant; Mr. Barua distinguished between long vowels that had been formed via sandhi, and those that are naturally long, that distinction is lost here; one comment, that was in the text in the printed edition has been moved to the notes; and I have corrected one or two small spelling mistakes.]

‘Buddhakhetta’ in the Apadāna

[183] It is both from [a] chronological point of view and as a class of poetical composition, [that] the Pali *Apadāna* ranks with the *Buddhavaṃsa* and *Cariyāpiṭaka*. According to the traditional enumeration of the Buddhist canonical texts, these are reckoned as the last three works of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*. Even from the doctrinal point of view the three works together show the Mahāyāna Buddhism in the making. The *Buddhavaṃsa*, as pointed out by Professor Barua,¹ lays stress on the *pañidhāna* (mental resolve) of the Bodhisatta to become a supreme type of Buddha and on the prediction made as to his success in the future as Buddha Gotama by the twenty-four Buddhas of the past during whose dispensations he had been developing his moral being. The *Cariyāpiṭaka* emphasizes upon the triple object of moral efforts (*cariyā*), namely, doing good to oneself, doing good to one's people, and doing good to the world at large, and appropriately illustrates the way in which the Bodhisatta was fulfilling the ten perfectionary virtues (*pāramīs* or *pāramitās*), each in three degrees of intensity. The *Apadāna*, on the other hand, is, with the exception of the two chapters, *Buddhāpadāna* and *Paccekabuddhāpadāna*, mainly concerned with narrating the previous lives of the Theras and Therīs who attained arahantship and came to

¹ See Barua's article entitled ‘Mahāyāna in the Making’ in *Sir Anutosh Mookerjee Silver Jubilee Volumes* (Calcutta, 1927), vol. III, part 3, pp. 163ff.

self-expression. It also divulges the difference between the achievements of a Perfect Buddha, a Paccekabuddha and a Perfect Disciple, all of whom are arahants, in respect of spiritual attainments, particularly the purity of their nature. It is, however, significant that the Dīghabhāṇakas, as Buddhaghosa tells us,² did not include in their list of works of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, these four books, now found in the Pali canon, namely, the *Apadāna*, *Buddhavaṃsa*, *Cariyāpiṭaka* and *Khuddakapāṭha*.

The canonical *Apadāna* was compiled as an appendix to the *Thera-Therīgāthā* or Psalms of the Early Buddhists. The psalms of some of the Therīs, e.g. that of Sumedhā, as pointed out by Mrs. Rhys Davids and others,³ contain the elements of the *Apadāna* legends. But the *Apadāna* embodies the legends of many Theras whose psalms are not to be found in the *Theragāthā*, and does not include the legends of all the Therīs whose stanzas find place in the *Therīgāthā*. The psalm of Therī Yasodharā, whose legend is contained in the *Apadāna*, is, however, sadly missed in the *Therīgāthā*.

The *Apadānas*, ascribed to the Theras and Therīs, connect the past existences of these Theras and Therīs with the present. Thus they display at least the two main characteristics of the *Jātakas* or Birth-stories of the Buddha, namely, the narration of the past life by the

² *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, part I, p. 10.

³ *Psalms of the Sisters*, Intro., pp. xvii ff.

Thera or Therī concerned and the identification of the present hero or heroine with the past, [184] and as such they may be treated, in a sense, as the Jātakas of the Theras and Therīs including the Buddha himself.⁴ The Apadānas nevertheless differ from the Jātakas, as they are lacking in moralizing spirit. Their whole stress is on the works of piety, such as the homage paid to a former Buddha or an offering made to him or a Buddha-shrine in the past creating an occasion for forming a mental resolve (*paṇidhāna*) to become an arahant during the dispensation of Buddha Śākyamuni. Their mental resolve, which was, in one way or other, a kind of prayer (*patthanā* or *abhipatthanā*), was augmented by the prediction made by a person of authority, namely a Perfect Buddha whom he or she pleased by worship or service (*adhikāra*).

The Buddhāpadāna, or the Tradition of the previous excellent deeds or services of the Buddhas, which forms the first chapter of the *Apadāna*, contains a vivid and charming description of the *Buddhakhetta*. *Buddhakhetta* is precisely a synonym of *Buddhabhūmi*,⁵ the land of the Buddhas. According to Buddhaghosa, the *Buddhakhetta* is of three kinds: that of his Nativity (*jātikkhettam*), that of his Ministry (*āṇākkhettam*), and that of his Omniscience (*visayakkhettam*). Of these, the last-named is infinite and boundless, where the

⁴ See 'Pubbakammapiḷoti nāma Buddhāpadānam' in *Apadāna*, vol. I, pp. 299-301.

⁵ Cf. *Buddhavaṃsa*, chap. II, v. 175.

Tathāgata knows whatever he wishes (*yattha yaṃ yaṃ Tathāgato akaṅkhati, taṃ taṃ jānāti*).⁶ It has been said that the sphere of the Buddha's omniscience is incomprehensible to others.⁷

The main interest of the *Buddhāpadāna*, it will be seen, centres round the romantic conception of the *Buddhakhetta*, an ideal land of art and beauty. It is an ideal educational institution, situated in the midst of the most beautiful and sombre natural surroundings, an eternal school, where, in the words of Professor Barua,⁸ 'every one is a teacher and every one a pupil'. Here the Buddhas question other Buddhas about their own sphere, the sphere of omniscience, and on matters, deep and subtle. The disciples, too, ask the Buddhas, and the Buddhas the disciples about things to be known by the disciples themselves. They question each other, and they answer each other. The Buddhas and the disciples, the masters and the attendants, the speakers and the audience, the teachers and the taught, all are seekers after truth in this grand Temple of Learning. Frankly and rightly they do discuss the things for their self-edification. Skilled in the maintenance of constant self-possession, they dwell harmoniously and in peace, and exert themselves to know the unknown, to realize the unrealized, and to

⁶ *Visuddhimagga*, vol. II, p. 414; *Path of Purity*, vol. II, p. 481.

⁷ Cf. *Dhammapada-Aṭṭhakathā*, vol. II, p. 199; *Buddhavisayo na cintetabbo*; also *Anguttara-Nikāya*, vol. II, p. 142; *Buddhavaṃsa*, I, 64; *Mahāvaṃsa*, XVII, v. 56; XXXI, v. 125.

⁸ Barua, *Barhut*, Bk. I (Stone at a Story-teller), p. 102.

master over what they have not yet mastered. The sphere of knowledge being infinite and boundless, even the Enlightened Ones are eager to be more enlightened, nay to be most enlightened.

This description of the *Buddhakhetta* is indubiously entirely a creation of fine poetic imagination, and its effect is idyllic. The whole poem is composed [185] in exquisitely elegant verses in Śloka metre which gained popularity under the influence of the Rāmāyaṇa. It is only the first two chapters of the *Buddhavamsa* which bear comparison with it in respect of the imagery, the vividness of description, and the impressiveness of the theme itself. In the poetic conception of the *Buddhakhetta*, was forestalled the later Mahāyānic idea of *Sukhāvātī*, the glorious land of Buddhist Paradise. It may be noted that the *Apadāna* of Sāriputta gives us a similar description of the earlier Āśrama institution (*assamapada*) of the hermit teachers in the midst of which stood the leaf-hut (*paṇṇasālā*) or simple cottage which has been replaced in the *Buddhāpadāna* by a magnificent edifice (*pāsāda*). Though the description of this edifice as a great model of architecture is confessedly imaginary and idealistic, one cannot gainsay that in its substratum there were actualities.

Besides instructions given by the Buddha to his disciples and followers, monks and laymen, the Buddhist canonical texts contain instances of the chief disciples of the Buddha holding discussions with

each other on various topics. Thus in the *Anaṅga Sutta*,⁹ Moggallāna interrogates Sāriputta regarding the ‘undefiled’. The *Rathavināta Sutta*¹⁰ records a conversation between Sāriputta and Puṇṇa Mantānīputta as to the nature of Nibbāna which is compared to a journey of King Pasenadi from Sāvattthī to Sāketa, by means of relays of seven chariots. The *Mahāvedalla Sutta*¹¹ also records a series of questions, asked by Mahakoṭṭhita and answered by Sāriputta, on psychological topics, e.g. understanding, consciousness, feeling, perception, etc. On other occasions, Sāriputta is questioned by Mahakoṭṭhita as to *kamma*,¹² *yonisamanasikāra*¹³ *avijjā* and *vijjā*¹⁴ the fetters of sense-perception,¹⁵ certain things pronounced by the Buddha as indeterminate,¹⁶ the six spheres of contact,¹⁷ and the purpose for which bhikkhus lead the *brahmacariya* life.¹⁸ Sāriputta also questions

⁹ *Majjhima-Nikāya*, vol. I, pp. 25ff.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 145ff.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 292ff.

¹² *Samyutta-Nikāya*, vol. II, pp. 112f.

¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 176f.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 172f.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. IV, pp. 162f.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 384f.

¹⁷ *Anguttara-Nikāya*, vol. II, p. 161.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 382.

Mahākassapa on the terms *ātāpi* and *ottāpi*,¹⁹ and Anuruddha on *sekha*,²⁰ and Upavāna on *bojjhaṅga*.²¹ Again, Ānanda is mentioned as questioning Sāriputta regarding *sotapatti*,²² and as to the reason why some beings are set free in this very life while others are not,²³ the speedy knowledge of aptness in things²⁴ (*kusaladhammesu khippanisanti*), and how a bhikkhu may learn new doctrines and retain old ones without confusion.²⁵

An English rendering²⁶ of the *Buddhāpadāna* is, for the first time, given below so as to draw attention of the Indologists to this piece of composition which stands out as a striking specimen of Early Buddhist poetry.

¹⁹ *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*, vol. II, pp. 195f.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. V, pp. 174f., 298f.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 346, 362.

²³ *Āṅguttara-Nikāya*, vol. II, p. 167.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 201f.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 361; cf. also Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, s.v. Sāriputta.

²⁶ Much of what was meant to be signified may be missed by the reader in the translation partly for want of a commentary to guide the present translator, and partly due to his unfamiliarity with the technical details of Indian architecture.

Buddhāpadāna

The Tradition of the Previous Excellent Deeds of the Buddhas

Translation

[186] 1. Now, with a pure mind, attend to the Tradition of the previous excellent deeds of the Buddhas, the innumerable kings of righteousness, replete with thirty Perfections.²⁷

2. To the supreme enlightenment of the best of the Buddhas, to leaders of the world together with their Orders, I bowed down paying homage with joined hands.²⁸

3. In the Buddha-realm, as many as are there the numerous jewels, both in the heaven above and on the earth below, I brought all to my mind.

²⁷ They consist of the ten principal virtues of Perfection (*pāramī*), such as, *Dāna*, *Sīla*, and the rest, each in three degrees of intensity, including the ten minor virtues (*upapāramī*), and the ten virtues in their ultimate sense (*paramatthapāramī*); for details, see *Cariyā-Piṭakaṭṭhakathā*, pp. 320f.

²⁸ Lit. '(with) the ten fingers'.

4. There on a silvery ground, I built a palace, many storied, jewelled, raised high to the sky,
5. Having ornamented pillars, well executed, well divided and arranged, costly, a mass of gold, decorated with arched gateways and canopies.
6. The first storey was of lapis lazuli, shining like a bright piece of cloud; there were (the presentations of) lotuses and lilies²⁹ strewn over in the excellent golden storey.
7. Some (of the storeys) was of corals, some having coral-lustre, some shining red, while others resembling the Indagopaka-colour,³⁰ illumined the quarters.
8. They had doors, portals and windows well divided and arranged, four net-works of *vedikās*³¹ and a delightful perfumed enclosure.
9. And they were provided with the excellent peaked roofs – blue, yellow, red, white and bright black – and decorated with seven varieties of jewels.

²⁹ Lit. ‘born in, or sprung from, water’.

³⁰ Indagopaka is ‘a sort of insect, observed to come out of the ground after rain’, cf. *Pali-English Dict.* (P.T.S.), s.v.

³¹ Lit. ‘railings’, ‘balustrades of the projecting windows’, see *Dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. II, p. 210; *Mahāvamsa Transl.*, pp. 220, 296.

10. They had (devices of) lotuses of graceful looks, and were beautified by (the figures of) beasts and birds of prey, filled with (the presentations of) planets and stars, and adorned with (those of) the moon and sun.³²

11. They were covered over with a golden netting joined with the golden tinkling bells, and the lovely golden garlands (on them) sounded musically by the force of the wind.

12. Festoons of banners, raised on them, were made lovely by various colours – crimson, red, yellow and gold-coloured.

[187] 13. Diverse, numerous, many hundreds were the slabs, made of silver, of jewels, of rubies, and also of emeralds.

14. The palace was resplendent with various beds, and covered with soft Benares fabrics, rugs, silk made of the Dukula-fibre, China cloth,³³ fine cloth, fibrous garments,³⁴ whitish³⁵ garments,³⁶ and all this manifold covering I spread out there in my mind.

³² For similar representation, cf. *Mahāvamsa*, chap. XXX, w. 62-97.

³³ Cf. *Buddhāvamsa*, chap. XXIV, v. 11.

³⁴ Cf. *Patrorṇā* in *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra*, ii, 11.

³⁵ Cf. *Paṇḍraka* in *ibid.*, ii, 11.

³⁶ Cf. *Paṇḍrakāḥ* in *ibid.*, ii, 11.

15. Adorned with jewelled peaked roofs in different storeys (the palace) stood firm, bearing torches shining like gems.

16. The wooden posts and pillars and the beautiful golden gates, made of gold brought from the Jambu river, of excellent (*sāra*) wood, and also of silver, shone forth.

17. Divided and arranged into many breaks³⁷ and resplendent with doors and cross-bars (the palace had) on both sides many full vases filled with red, white and blue lotuses.³⁸

18. All the Buddhas of the past, the leaders of the world, together with their Orders and disciples, I created in their natural beauty and appearance.

19. Entering by that entrance, all the Buddhas together with their disciples – the circle of the elect – sat down on golden seats.

20. The pre-eminent Buddhas that are now in the world, those of the past and present, I brought them all into the mansion.

21. Many hundreds of Paccekabuddhas, self-enlightened and invincible, those of the past and present, I brought them all into the mansion.

³⁷ Sandhi.

³⁸ For a later description of *pāsāda*, cf. *Mahāvamsa*, chap. XXVII, w. 24-41; *Thūpavamsa*, pp. 67f.

22. Many wishing trees, divine and earthly, there were; I procured all garments and covered (them each) with three robes.

23. Filling the beautiful jewelled bowls, I offered (them) ready-made food, hard and soft, eatable and savoury, as well as drink and meal.

24. Procuring divine garments, I provided them with robes of fine cloth; I entertained the whole circle of the elect with best food and (the four) sweet drinks of sugar, oil, honey and molasses.

25. Entering the jewelled chamber, they, like lions lying down in caves, lay down in a lion's posture³⁹ on costly beds.

26. Mindful they rose and sat down cross-legged; they gave themselves up to delight in meditation on the way⁴⁰ of all the Buddhas.

27. Some preached the doctrines, some sported by their supernormal power, some who had gained mastery over and developed the higher psychic [188] perception, applied themselves to it, while others numbering many hundred thousands worked transformations of themselves by their supernormal power.

³⁹ i.e. on the right side.

⁴⁰ *Gocara*. Lit., 'pasture', search after food; here it evidently implies search for mental food. A suitable *Gocaragāma* is, however, mentioned, as one of the seven desiderates for one intent on meditation, see *Visuddhimagga*, p. 127.

28. The Buddhas, too, questioned (other) Buddhas on points relating to omniscience, and comprehended by their knowledge matters, deep and subtle,

29. The disciples questioned the Buddhas, the Buddhas questioned the disciples; they questioned each other, to each other did they explain.

30. The Buddhas, the Paccekabuddhas, the disciples and attendants, enjoying thus their delightful pursuits, rejoiced at the palace.

31. 'May they hold over [their] head (each) an umbrella, embroidered with gold and silver nets and gems, and fringed with nets of pearls!

32. May there be awnings, resplendent with golden stars, variegated, and having flower-wreaths spread over (them); may they all hold them over [their] head!

33. Be (the palace) laid out with wreaths of flowers, fragrant with rows of perfumes, strewn over with festoons of garments, and bedecked with strings of jewels!

34. Be it strewn over with flowers, much variegated, incensed with sweet perfumes, marked with five-finger marks of perfumes, and covered over with a golden covering.

35. On four sides, be the tanks covered over with lotuses – red and white and blue; be that these having lotus-pollens coming out, appear in golden hue!

36. All trees be blossomed around the palace, and let them drooping themselves sprinkle perfumed flowers over the mansion.

37. Let the crested (peacocks) dance there, divine swans utter melodious sounds. Let the Karavikā birds,⁴¹ too, sing out and the flocks of birds be on all sides.

38. Let all drums be sounded, all lutes be played. Let all varieties of music go on around the palace.

39. As far as the Buddha-realm, and above the horizons of the world, magnificent, lustrous, faultless and jewelled,

40. Let the golden divans be; let candlesticks⁴² be lighted, and the ten thousand (worlds) in succession be of one lustre.

41. Let also courtesans, dancers and celestial nymphs dance, and various theatres be staged around the palace.

⁴¹ Identified with Indian Cuckoos.

⁴² Lit. 'Trees of lamps' see *Buddhavamsa*, I, 45; cf. also '*dipasstambha* of Indian archeology, or "branched candlestick" in the Bible', as noted by Dr. B. C. Law in his translation of the *Buddhavamsa*.

42. On tree-tops, mountain-tops, or on the summit of the Sineru mountain,⁴³ let me raise all manners of banners, variegated and five-coloured.

43. Let men, Nāgas, Gandhabbas⁴⁴ and gods, all approach them paying homage with joined hands, and surround the palace.'

[189] 44. Whatever good deed done, ought to be done, or intended to be done by me, I did it well by body, speech and mind in (the abode of) the Thirty.⁴⁵

45. 'The beings who are conscious or unconscious, let all share in the result of the meritorious deed done by me.

46. To (them) whom the result of the meritorious deed done by me has been offered, it is (thus) made well known. And to those who do not know of it, the gods should go and report.

47. In the whole world, the beings that live but for the sake of food, let them obtain all manners of agreeable food by my heart's wish.'

⁴³ Skt. Sumeru.

⁴⁴ Gandhabbas (Skt. Gandharvas), as a class, belong to the demigods who inhabit the Cātummahārājikā realm.

⁴⁵ It is the round figure for thirty-three, and is used as equivalent to the Tāvātimsa heaven; cf. *Petavatthu*, iii, 1; *Vimānavatthu*. 18. 30.

48. Mentally I offered the gift, mentally I brought the palace. I did homage to all the supreme Buddhas, Paccekas and disciples of the conquerors.

49. By that meritorious deed, will and resolve, I, abandoning the human body, went up to the Thirty-three.

50. I have come to know (only) of the two existences, divine and human; no other destiny have I experienced this is the fulfilment of my mental wish.

51. I have been superior to the gods, I have become the lord of men. Endowed with beauty and appearance, I am incomparable in the world in respect of wisdom.

52. Food of various kinds and best, jewels not inadequate, and garments of all fashions come to me quickly from above.⁴⁶

53. On earth as well as mountain, in the air, water and wood, wherever I stretch forth my hand, divine eatables come to me.

54. On earth as well as mountain, in the air, water and wood, wherever I stretch forth my hand, all varieties of jewels come to me.

55. On earth as well as mountain, in the air, water and wood, wherever I stretch forth my hand, all kinds of perfumes come to me.

⁴⁶ Lit. the sky.

56. On earth as well as mountain, in the air, water and wood, wherever I stretch forth my hand, all kinds of vehicles come to me.

57. On earth as well as mountain, in the air, water and wood, wherever I stretch forth my hand, all kinds of garlands come to me.

58. On earth as well as mountain, in the air, water and wood, wherever I stretch forth my hand, (all manners of) decorations come to me.

59. On earth as well as mountain, in the air, water and wood, wherever I stretch forth my hand, maidens of all descriptions come to me.

60. On earth as well as mountain, in the air, water and wood, wherever I stretch forth my hand, come (to me) honey and sugar.

61. On earth as well as mountain, in the air, water and wood, wherever I stretch forth my hand, all varieties of solid food come to me.

62. To the poor and needy, to the professional and street-beggars, whatever excellent gift I made, (it was) for the attainment of the Enlightenment *par excellence*.

63. While making mountains and rocks roar, dense forest thunder, this world and heaven joyous, I have become a Buddha in the world.

[190] 64. In this world, tenfold is the direction of which there is no end, and in that direction are the innumerable Buddha-realms.

65. My halo is described as shooting forth rays in pairs; let the blaze of rays between them be of great effulgence.

66. In such world-systems, let all persons see me, let all be joyful, and let all follow me.

67. Let the drum of immortality be beaten with reverberating sweet-sound; in the midst of it let all persons hear my sweet voice.

68. While the cloud of righteousness showers, let all be free from the defilements; let the lowest of beings be (at least) the Stream-winners.

69. Giving away the gift [*dāna*] worthy to be given, I fulfilled the precepts [*sīla*] entirely, reached perfection in the matter of renunciation [*nekkhamma*], and obtained the Enlightenment *par excellence*.

70. Questioning the wise [*paññā*], I put forth the best energy [*virīya*], reached perfection in the matter of forbearance [*khanti*], and obtained the Enlightenment *par excellence*.

71. Intent on truth [*adhiṭṭhāna*], I fulfilled the perfection of truth [*sacca*]; reaching perfection in friendliness [*mettā*], I obtained the Enlightenment *par excellence*.

72. In gain and loss, in happiness and sorrow, in respect and disrespect, being unperturbed [*upekkhā*] under all vicissitudes, I obtained the Enlightenment *par excellence*.

73. Viewing idleness from fear, and energy from peace, be energetic – this is the command of the Buddhas.

74. Viewing dissention from fear, and amity from peace, be united and kindly in speech – this is the command of the Buddhas.

75. Viewing indolence from fear, and diligence from peace, cultivate the eightfold path – this is the command of the Buddhas.

76. Assembled (here) are many Buddhas and Arahants from all quarters; to the supreme Buddhas and Arahants pay homage and bow down.

77. Thus are the Buddhas incomprehensible, and incomprehensible are the qualities of the Buddhas and incomprehensible is the reward of those who have faith in the incomprehensible.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Cf. *Mahāvamsa*. chap. XVII, v. 56; chap. XXXI, v. 125.

Thus the Blessed One, while developing his own Buddha-life, related the religious discourse, called the Tradition of the previous excellent deeds of the Buddhas.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *Buddhāpadāna* means the previous deeds of the Buddhas, their difficult tasks of the past, and the *Buddhāpadāniya* is so called because (the tradition of) these excellent deeds or services is handed down and preached by the Buddhas. ‘*Buddhāpadāniyaṃ nāmā ti Buddhānaṃ purātanakammaṃ, porāṇaṃ dukkarakiriyaṃ adhiikkappavattattā desitattā Buddhāpadāniyaṃ ti evannāmakam.*’ – *Cariyā-Piṭakaṭṭhakathā*, p. 335.

The Buddhāpadāna, or the Tradition of the previous excellent deeds or services of the Buddhas, which forms the first chapter of the Apadāna, contains a vivid and charming description of the Buddhakhetta, the land of the Buddhas.