[Aṣokāvadāna]

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The Legend of King Aśoka

A Study and Translation of the Aṣokāvadāna

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(South Asia)

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The Legend of Aśoka

PROLOGUE

1 [The Buddha] made sacrifices
   with the flesh of his own body,¹
   and out of compassion practiced austerities
   for the well-being of the world.
   Good people, listen devoutly now
   to what is being said,
   so that his exertions may bear fruit.

   “Thus have I heard. Once, when the Blessed One was dwelling
   in Śrāvasti . . .”² Thus a sūtra is to be spoken.

   In the presence of our teachers for whom the mud-piles of
   passion, hatred, delusion, intoxication, arrogance, duplicity,
   and rascality have all been washed away by the flowing rain
   showers of the words of the Blessed Tathāgata, issued forth
   from his open cloud-like mouth; for whom the obscurantist
   teachings of the heretical treatises have been dispelled by the
   light of wisdom born from understanding the scholarly works
   or grammar, logic, and other subjects; who are themselves
   addicted to drinking the water of the most excellent true Dharm
   that cuts off the thirst for samsāra—in their presence, let us
   recall together a dhammic tale that brightens the minds of gods
   and men. It begins with the story of the elder Upagupta, the
   foremost of all the preachers, whose teaching was unmatched
   even by Śakra, Brahmā, Iśāna, Yama, Varuṇa, Kuvera, Vā.

¹ This undoubtedly is a reference to the Buddha’s past lives, recounted in
the Jātaka, in which he gave up his life and/or limbs for the sake of others.
² This formulaic line—the traditional opening sentence of Buddhist sūtras—
seems to have been introduced here to give the impression that the Asokā-
śadāna is indeed a sūtra. This, in fact, is boldly (and rather unusually) stated
to be the case in the next sentence. Although the Asokāśadāna was classified
as a sūtra in certain Sanskrit Buddhist circles, it, of course, cannot be thought
of as literally being the word of the Buddha. This appears to be recognized
in the next paragraph which attributes what follows to the teachers (gurus).
sava, Soma, Aditi, and the other gods, a hero sweeping away the pride of Kandarpa [Kāma], a magnanimous being with very great supernatural powers. Listen, then, to the teachers with attentive ears.

**Upagupta’s Past Life**

It is said that when the Blessed One, around the time of his parinirvāṇa, had converted the nāga Apālā, the potter, the outcaste woman, and Gopālī, he reached the city of Mathurā. There he spoke to the Venerable Ānanda: “Ānanda, right here in Mathurā, one hundred years after my parinirvāṇa, there will be a perfumer named Gupta. He will have a son named Upagupta, a Buddha without the marks, who, in those days, will carry on the work of a Buddha. Through his teaching, many monks will rid themselves of all their defilements and experience arhatship—[so many that] they will fill up a cave eighteen cubits long and twelve cubits wide with their tally-sticks (śaḷākā) four inches in length. Furthermore, Ānanda, this same monk Upagupta will be the foremost of all my disciples who are preachers.

“Ānanda, do you see over there that dark line on the horizon?”

“Yes, your reverence.”

“That, Ānanda, is the mountain called Urumuṇḍa. There, one hundred years after the parinirvāṇa of the Tathāgata, a monk called Śānakavāsin will build a monastery and initiate Upagupta into the monastic life. Moreover, Ānanda, in Mathurā, there will be two guild masters, the brothers Naṭa and Bhaṭa. They will build a monastery on Mount Urumuṇḍa; it will be known as the Naṭabhaṭṭika, and will be the best of all my forest hermitages where the beds and seats are conducive to meditation.”

Then the Venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: “Your reverence, it is marvellous that the Venerable Upagupta will do such things for the benefit of many people!”

The Blessed One replied: “This is not the only time, Ānanda; in a previous life too, in a body that is now no more, Upagupta worked right here for the benefit of many people. At that time [various beings lived on each of] the three slopes of Mount Urumuṇḍa: five hundred pratyekabuddhas dwelt together in one place, five hundred rṣis (brahmanical ascetics) in another, and five hundred monkeys in a third. One day, the leader of the five hundred monkeys left his band and went to the mountainside where the five hundred pratyekabuddhas were living. As soon as he saw those pratyekabuddhas, his faith was engendered. He made an offering of withered leaves, roots, and fruits to them, and, when they sat down cross-legged in meditation, he prostrated himself in front of the eldest members of the group, and then went to where the novices were and sat down cross-legged himself.

“Before long, the pratyekabuddhas attained parinirvāṇa. The monkey [again] presented withered leaves, roots, and fruits to them, but, of course, they did not accept them. He pulled at the folds of their robes, and grabbed their feet, but they did not move. Finally, he thought to himself ‘Surely they have passed away,’ and, full of sorrow, he lamented and went to the other side of the mountain where the five hundred rṣis were dwelling.

“Now some of these rṣis had couches of thorns, and others had beds of ashes; some were standing holding their hands aloft, and others were practicing the penance of the five fires. 3 The monkey began to disrupt their various ascetic performances; he pulled out the thorns of the couches of thorns, he scattered the ashes of the beds of ashes, he caused those whose hands were raised to lower them, and he put out the fires of those sitting between five fires. Then, when he had thus disrupted their ascetic performance, he assumed a cross-legged posture in front of them.

“In time, the rṣis reported all of this to their teacher; he

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3 An ascetic practice consisting of sitting between four fires built in the four cardinal directions, with the fifth fire, the sun, blazing above.
told them also to assume a cross-legged position. Accordingly, those five hundred ascetics sat down cross-legged, and, without a preceptor or an instructor, they understood the dharmas that are the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment, and experienced pratyekabodhi.\(^4\) They then reflected: 'This most excellent thing that we have attained is all due to this monkey.' So they provided the monkey with ample roots and fruits, and, when his time came, they cremated his body with fragrant wood.

"Now what do you think, Ananda? The one who was the leader of this band of five hundred monkeys, he is this very Upagupta. Even then, in a body that is now no more, he worked for the benefit of many people, right here on Mount Uruμuṇḍa. So too, in a life to come, one hundred years after my parinirvāṇa, he will work for the benefit of many people in this same spot." And just so, we will illustrate it.

**The Śāṇakavāsin Episode**

When the elder Śāṇakavāsin had built his monastery on Mount Uruμuṇḍa, he focussed his mind on [the question of] whether or not Gupta, the perfume merchant, had yet been born; and he saw that he had.\(^5\) He then focussed his mind on [the question of] whether or not his son Upagupta—a Buddha without the marks who, it was foretold, would carry out the work of a Buddha one hundred years after the parinirvāṇa—had been born; and he saw that he had not.

Now eventually, through skillful means, Gupta the perfumer came to be favorably disposed toward the Teaching of the Blessed One. One day, after this had happened, the elder Śāṇakavāsin went to his house along with many monks; then, on another day, he went there with only one other monk; and, on a third day, he went there all alone.

When Gupta saw that the elder Śāṇakavāsin was all by himself, he asked:

"How is it that the Noble One has no attendant?"

"Why," replied the elder, "should we, who are subject to old age, have any attendants? If someone, moved by faith, should be initiated into the monastic life, then he would truly be an attendant and a follower of ours."

"Noble One," said the perfume merchant, "I have always been greedy for the householder's life and taken delight in the field of the senses; it is not possible for me to be initiated into the monastic life. However, when I have a son, I will give him to your lordship as an attendant."

"So be it, my child," said the elder, "but you should remember this firm promise."

Now eventually a son was born to Gupta the perfumer, and he was given the name "Aśvagupta." When he had grown, the elder Śāṇakavāsin went to Gupta and said: "My child, you promised that when you had a son, you would offer him to us as an attendant. Now this son has been born to you; give your consent, and I will initiate him into the monastic life."

"Noble One," said the perfumer, "this is my only son. Please exempt him. I will have another, a second son, and will give him to your lordship as an attendant."

Then the elder Śāṇakavāsin focussed his mind [on the question] "Is this boy Upagupta?" And seeing that it was not, he declared: "So be it."

After some time, a second son was born to Gupta the perfumer, and he was given the name "Dhanagupta." And again, when he had grown, the elder Śāṇakavāsin said to Gupta: "My child, you promised that when you had a son, you would offer him to us as an attendant. Now this son has been born

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\(^4\) The thirty-seven bodhipakṣadharmas are qualities characterizing or contributing to enlightenment and are often referred to in Buddhist sources. One of the characteristics of pratyekabuddhas is that they attain enlightenment on their own, without the direct assistance of an instructor or master.

\(^5\) It is understood that he "focusses his mind" (samanvāharaṇi) with the aid of his meditative powers.
gandharvas, and vīdyaśārhas all fell at his feet; and the rain waters of the true Dharma fell on hundreds of thousands of beings who had previously sown seeds of merit in most excellent Buddha fields, and the sprouts of liberation grew in them, there on Mount Uruippa.

THE GIFT OF DIRT

Let us [now] recollect the gift of dirt made in a previous life by King Aśoka whose footstool is illumined by the glittering crest jewels of his vassals all dutifully bowing down before him.

It is said that one morning, when the Blessed One was dwelling at Kalandakanivāpa in the Veṇuvana near Rājagṛha, he put on his robes, took his bowl, and, surrounded by a group of monks and honored by the monastic community, he entered Rājagṛha for alms.

As it is said:

With his entourage of monks the Blessed One went forth,
his superlative body: a mountain of gold.
He moved with ease like the lord of elephants,
his gentle countenance: a full moon.

As soon as he arrived at the city gate, he set his foot down on the threshold stone (indrakīla) with a resolute mind. Now whenever Blessed Buddhas set their feet down on the threshold stone of a city gate with a resolute mind, it is usual for various marvels to occur. The blind recover their sight, the deaf become able to hear, the lame can walk again. Those who are bound by fetters and shackles find their bonds have loosened. Those who have been attached to enmity in birth after birth suddenly become full of love. Calves that have broken their tethers are reunited with their mothers. Elephants trumpet,

11 On these various kinds of semi-mythical beings, see Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), and the glossary below.

12 The order of the original has been slightly rearranged here.

horses neigh, bulls bellow, parrots, myna birds, cuckoos, pheasants, and peacocks warble delightfully. Ornaments stored in boxes tinkle with sweet sounds, and drums, without being struck, make a pleasant noise. Those places on earth that are high are made low, and those that are low are made high, and stones, gravel and potsherds disappear. At the same time, the earth is made to tremble in six uncommon ways: the East goes up, the West goes down, the edge goes down, the center goes up, there is quaking and shaking, and there is rumbling and trembling. These are but a few of the marvelous phenomena that are observed when the Blessed One enters a city.

As it is said:

A vessel is struck by the force of the wind; so too the earth with its mountain ranges, set in the ocean, and adorned with cities and settlements, is affected by the foot of the Sage.

Low ground is elevated and high ground made low by the power of the Buddha the earth becomes faultless, devoid of stones, gravel, and thorns. The blind, the dumb, and the dimwits instantly regain their senses, and musical instruments without being touched play in harmony to the delightful of the town.

Now the men and women [of Rājagṛha] were converted by these miracles that occurred when the Buddha entered [their city], and the whole town let out a cheer as loud as the roar of the stormy sea with its crashing wind-tossed waves; for no marvel can be found in this world to equal that of the arrival of the Buddha. The entire city was filled with the radiance of
the Lord, his golden rays more resplendent than a thousand suns.

It was said that:

The sun was eclipsed by his brilliant rays which reached even into the forested areas and filled the whole world, bringing delightful tales of highest Dharma to the realms of the gods, asuras, and men whose various situations they addressed.\(^{13}\)

Soon the Blessed One came to the main road where two little boys were playing at building houses in the dirt. One of them was the son of a very prominent family and was named Jaya, while the other was the son of a somewhat less prominent family and was named Vijaya. Both of them saw the Buddha whose appearance is very pleasing, his body adorned with the thirty-two marks of the Great Man. And young Jaya, thinking to himself “I will give him some ground meal,” threw a handful of dirt into the Buddha’s begging bowl. Vijaya approved of this by making an añjali.

As it is said:

He saw the greatly compassionate Self-Existence Lord whose body radiated a halo a fathom wide; his faith affirmed, and with a resolute face, he offered some dirt to the One who brings an end to birth and old age.

After presenting this offering to the Blessed One, Jaya then proceeded to make the following resolute wish (prāṇidhāna): “By this root of good merit, I would become king and, after placing the earth under a single umbrella of sovereignty, I would pay homage to the Blessed Buddha.”

\(^{13}\) The image is one of the rays themselves preaching sermons appropriate to the conditions of the beings in various realms. See Jean Przybyszki, *La légende de l'empereur Aśoka* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1923), p. 226, and see below the account of the rays from the Buddha’s smile.

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The compassionate Sage immediately perceived the boy’s character, and recognizing the sincerity of his resolve, he saw that the desired fruit would be attained because of his field of merit. He therefore accepted the proferred dirt, and the seed of merit that was to ripen into Aśoka’s kingship was planted.

**THE BUDDHA’S SMILE**

The Blessed One then displayed his smile. Now whenever Blessed Buddhas smile, it is usual for rays of blue, yellow, red, white, scarlet, crystal, and silver-colored light to issue forth from their mouths, some shooting upwards and others going downwards. The rays that travel downwards enter into the various hells—the Saṅjiva, the Kālasūtra, the Sanghātha, the Raurava, the Mahāraurava, the Tapana, the Pratāpana, and finally the Avīci. Becoming warm they penetrate the cold hells, and becoming cool, they enter the hot ones. In this manner, the various tortures being inflicted in the hells are allayed, and the beings dwelling in them come to wonder: “What is happening? Have we left this place? Our sufferings have been alleviated—can it be that we have been reborn elsewhere?”

Then, in order to engender their faith, the Blessed One creates for these various hell-beings a magical image of himself that causes them to think: “We have not left, nor have we been reborn elsewhere. But this person we have never seen before—it must be by his power that our tortures have been reduced.” And contemplating the magical apparition of the Buddha they become serene and full of faith, and casting off the karma yet to be suffered in the hells, they are reborn among the gods or men, where they become vessels of truth.

The rays that travel upwards go to the realms of the various gods—Caturmahārājika, Trayāstrimśat, Yāma, Tuṣita, Nīmaṇparati, Paranirmitavaśāvartin, Brahmakāyika, Brahmauparhiṇa, Mahābrahma, Parītābhā, Apramāṇābha, Ābhaśvara, Parītattāvaha, Apramāṇasaubha, Subhakrīśna, Anabhrika,
Punyaprasava, Brhatphala, Abha, Atapa, Sudrśa, Sudarśana, and finally Akanistha. Everywhere they proclaim the facts of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and non-self, and declare to the gods these two verses:

Start now! Leave home! Apply yourself to the Buddha's Teaching!
Overthrow the army of Death the way an elephant smashes a reed hut!
For whoever goes forth intent on the Doctrine and Discipline
Will put an end to suffering and abandon this cycle of rebirth.

After roaming throughout the Great Trichiliocosm, all of the rays then reenter the Buddha's body. If a Buddha wants to reveal a past action they vanish into him from behind; if he wants to predict a future action they disappear into him from the front. If he wants to predict a rebirth in hell they vanish into the sole of his foot; if he wants to predict a rebirth as an animal they vanish into his heel; if he wants to predict a rebirth as a hungry ghost they vanish into his big toe; if he wants to predict a rebirth as a human being they vanish into his knees; if he wants to predict the kingship of a balacakravartin they vanish into his left palm; if he wants to predict the kingship of a cakravartin they vanish into his right palm; if he wants to predict a rebirth as a god they vanish into his navel; if he wants to predict the enlightenment of a disciple they vanish into his mouth; if he wants to predict the enlightenment of a pratyekabuddha they vanish into his urṇā; if he wants to predict the unsurpassed complete enlightenment of a Buddha they vanish into his usṣīṣa.

In the case at hand, the rays circumambulated the Blessed One three times and vanished into his left palm. The Venerable

14 Trisāhasramahāhasa lokadhatu: the largest unit of Buddhist cosmology, "a world system consisting of a triple thousand great thousand worlds." See Edgerton, Dictionary, s.v.

And he added this stanza:

Buddhas have no more arrogance; they are free from affliction and passion. Their causes are the highest in the world. Victors who have vanquished the enemy, it is not without reason that they display the smile whiter than the conch or the lotus.
O Valiant One, O Śramaṇa, O most eminent Jina, you have already divined the questions that plague your listeners. Dispel their doubts, O Best of Sages, with firm, brilliant, most excellent words. O foremost of men, whose speech is like thunder, whose appearance is like that of the best of bulls reveal what will be the fruit of the gift of dirt!

The Blessed One said: "You are right, Ánanda, completely enlightened Tathāgata Arhats do not display their smile gratuitously; rather they do so for both a cause and a reason. Ánanda, do you see that boy who threw a handful of dirt into the Tathāgata's bowl?"

"Yes, Bhadanta."

"Because of that meritorious deed, Ánanda, one hundred years after the Tathāgata has attained parinirvāna, that boy will become a king named Asoka in the city of Pāṭaliputra. He will be a righteous dharma-rāja, a cakravartin who rules over one of the four continents, and he will distribute my bodily relics far and wide and build the eighty-four thousand..."
dharma-rājikās. This he will undertake for the well being of many people,”
And he added:

After I die there will be an emperor;
his name will be Aśoka and his fame widespread.
He will adorn Jambudvīpa with my reliquaries
and cause them to be honored by gods and men.
His meritorious gift was just this:
he threw a handful of dirt into the Tathāgata’s bowl.

Then the Blessed One gave all the dirt to the Venerable Ānanda and said: “Mix this with some cowdung and spread
it on the walkway (cankrama) where the Tathāgata walks.”
And the Venerable Ānanda did as he was told.

AŚOKA’S BIRTH

Now at that time, King Bimbisāra was reigning in the city
of Rājagṛha. Bimbisāra’s son was Ajātaśatrū; Ajātaśatrū’s was
Udāyin; the good Udāyin’s son was Munḍa; Munḍa’s was
Kākavarnī; Kākavarnī’s was Sahalin; Sahalin’s was Tula-
kucī; Tulkucī’s was Mahāmaṇḍala, Mahāmaṇḍala’s was Pra-
seṇajīt, Prasenajīt’s was Nanda; and Nanda’s son was the king
named Bindusāra who reigned in the city of Pāṭaliputra. King
Bindusāra begot a son who was given the name Susima.

Meanwhile, in the city of Campā, a certain Brahmin begot
a fair, good-looking, gracious daughter, the most beautiful
girl in the country. The fortunetellers predicted she would
marry a king and bear two jewel-like sons: one would become
a cakravartin ruling over one of the four continents, the other
would wander forth and fulfill his religious vows.

The Brahmin was excited by what the soothsayers said.
(The whole world desires good fortune.) He took his daughter
to Pāṭaliputra. There, he had her put on all of her jewels, and
he offered her in marriage to King Bindusāra, declaring her
to be an auspicious and praiseworthy celestial maiden. King
Bindusāra had her introduced into his harem.

Now the king’s concubines were jealous of her. “This fair,
gracious girl,” they thought, “is the most beautiful woman
in the country; if the king should ever make love to her, he would
no longer pay any attention to us!” They instructed her therefore
in the barber’s art, and soon she became an expert at
grooming the hair and the beard of the king. Indeed, whenever
she started to do this, he [would relax so much that he] would
quickly fall asleep. The king was very pleased with her and
decided to grant her one wish.

“What would you most desire?” he asked.

“That your majesty should have intercourse with me,” she
answered.

“But you are a barber girl,” said the king, “I am a monarch,
a consecrated kṣatrya [member of the warrior caste]—how
can I have intercourse with you?”

“Your majesty,” she replied, “I am not a barber girl but
the daughter of a Brahmin; my father gave me to your highness
as a wife!”

“Who then taught you the barber’s art?” asked the king.

“The harem women,” was her answer.

“Well, then, you won’t do the work of a barber any more,”
King Bindusāra declared, and he installed her as his chief
queen. Together they dallied, enjoyed each other, and made
love; she became pregnant and, after a period of eight or nine
months, gave birth to a son. When the prince’s full birth
festival was being celebrated, she was asked what his name
should be. “When this baby was born, I became ‘without
sorrow’ (a-sōka),” the queen replied, and so the child was
given the name Aśoka.

Subsequently, the queen gave birth to a second son, and
since he was born “when sorrow had ceased” (vigate sōke),
he was given the name Vitaśoka.

One day, Bindusāra decided to test his sons so as to deter-
mine which one would best be able to rule after his death.
Accordingly he spoke to the wandering ascetic Piṅgalavatsājīva, asking him to examine the princes.

"Very well, your majesty," replied Piṅgalavatsājīva, "go with the Garden of the Golden Pavilion, and I will scrutinize them there." Bindusāra, therefore, summoned his sons and proceeded to that place.

Now Aśoka's body [had bad skin; it] was rough and unpleasant to the touch, and he was not at all liked by his father, King Bindusāra. His mother told him: "My son, the king wants to examine all the princes and has gone to the Garden of the Golden Pavilion to do so; you should go there as well."

But he retorted: "Why should I? The very sight of me is hateful to the king."

"Go nevertheless," she advised, and he finally consented. Asking his mother to send him some food later in the day, he departed forthwith.

As he was leaving Paṭaliputra, Rādhagupta, the son of the prime minister, saw him and asked: "Aśoka, where are you going?"

"Today," he answered, "the king is going to examine the princes in the garden of the Golden Pavilion."

[When Rādhagupta heard this, he invited Aśoka to take]16 the old royal elephant on which he was mounted. It was a venerable beast, and Aśoka rode it out to the Garden of the Golden Pavilion. Once there, he got off and sat down on the ground in the midst of the other princes. Before long, food arrived for all of them; Aśoka's mother had sent him some boiled rice mixed with curds in a clay pot.

Then King Bindusāra said to the wanderer Piṅgalavatsājīva: "Master, please examine the princes; who will best be able to rule after my death?"

Piṅgalavatsājīva scrutinized the young men and realized that Aśoka would be king, but he thought: "Bindusāra does not like Aśoka; if I tell him he will be king, he will surely kill me!" So he said: "Your majesty, I will make my prediction without disclosing any names."

"Do so then," said the king, "predict without disclosure."

The wandering ascetic then declared: "He who has an excellent mount will become king." All of the princes, of course, immediately thought that their mount was most excellent and they would become king, but Aśoka reflected: "I arrived on the back of an elephant; my mount is truly excellent! I shall be king."

Bindusāra then said: "Master, scrutinize the princes more than that!"

So Piṅgalavatsājīva declared: "Your majesty, he who has the best seat will become king."

And again, each of the princes thought his own seat was the best, but Aśoka reflected: "I am sitting on the ground; the earth is my seat! I shall be king."

In a similar fashion, Piṅgalavatsājīva examined the princes with regard to their vessels, food, and drink, and when he had finished he returned to Paṭaliputra.

Later, Aśoka's mother asked him: "Who was predicted to become king?"

Aśoka responded: "The prediction was made without disclosure. The one who had the best mount, seat, drink, vessel, and food will become king. The back of an elephant was my mount, the earth was my seat, my vessel was made of clay, boiled rice with curds was my food, and water was my drink; therefore I know I shall be king."

Now the wanderer Piṅgalavatsājīva, knowing that Aśoka would ascend the throne, started honoring his mother. One day, she asked him which one of the princes would succeed her husband Bindusāra, and he told her it would be Aśoka.

"The king," she cautioned him, "may someday interrogate you on this matter and press you for an answer. You had better go and seek refuge in the borderlands. When you hear that Aśoka has become king, it will be safe to return." And so he went into exile in a neighboring country.

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16 Added from the Chinese, see Przyluski, La légende, p. 231.
Aśoka’s Accession

Now it happened that the city of Takṣaśilā rebelled against King Bindusāra. He therefore sent Aśoka there, saying: “Go, son, lay siege to the city of Takṣaśilā.” He sent with him a fourfold army consisting of cavalry, elephants, chariots, and infantry, but he denied it any arms. As Aśoka was about to leave Pāṭaliputra, his servants informed him of this: “Prince, we don’t have any weapons of war; how and with what shall we do battle?”

Aśoka declared: “If my merit is such that I am to become king, may weapons of war appear before me!”

And as soon as he had spoken these words, the earth opened up and deities brought forth weapons. Before long, he was on his way to Takṣaśilā with his fourfold army of troops.

When the citizens of Takṣaśilā heard that Aśoka was coming, they bedecked the road for two and a half yojanas, and with their vases full of offerings, went out to welcome him.

“We did not want to rebel against the prince,” they explained upon greeting him, “nor even against King Bindusāra; but evil ministers came and oppressed us.” And with great hospitality, they escorted him into the city.

Sometime later, Aśoka was welcomed in a similar fashion in the kingdom of the Khaṣas. There two great warriors entered his service; he provided for their livelihood, and they in return, marched ahead of him, cutting a path through the mountains. Everywhere they went the gods proclaimed: “Aśoka is to become a cakravartin ruler over one of the four continents; no one is to oppose him!” And eventually the whole earth, as far as the ocean, submitted to his rule.

Now one day when Prince Susima happened to be returning to Pāṭaliputra from the royal park, he met King Bindusāra’s prime minister who was just leaving the city. The prime minister was bald and Prince Susima, in jest, slapped him on the head.

“Today he slaps me with his hand,” the minister reflected,
ritors at two of the city gates and Rādhagupta at a third. He himself stood at the eastern gate. In front of it, Rādhagupta set up an artificial elephant,18 on top of which he placed an image of Aśoka that he had fashioned. All around he dug a ditch, filled it with live coals of acacia wood, covered it with reeds, and camouflaged the whole with dirt. He then went and taunted Susīma: “If you are able to kill Aśoka, you will become king!”

Susīma immediately rushed to the eastern gate, intending to do battle with his half-brother, but he fell into the ditch full of charcoal, and came to an untimely and painful end. After he had been killed, his own great warrior, Bhadrāyuddha, was initiated into the Buddhist order and became an arhat along with his retinue of several thousand men.

AŚOKA THE FIERCE

Once Aśoka had become king, many of his ministers began to look on him with contempt. In order to discipline them, he ordered them, [as a test of their loyalty], to chop down all the flower and fruit trees but to preserve the thorn trees.

“What is your majesty planning?” they asked, “should we not rather chop down the thorn trees and preserve the flower and fruit trees?” And three times they countermanded his order. Aśoka became furious at this; he unsheathed his sword and cut off the heads of five hundred ministers.

On another occasion, King Aśoka, together with his harem, went out to a park east of the city. It was springtime and the trees were in bloom or laden with fruit. Strolling through the park he came across an aśoka tree whose blossoms were at their peak, and thinking “this beautiful tree is my namesake,” he became very affectionate. King Aśoka’s body, however, was rough-skinned, and the young women of the harem did not enjoy caressing him. So after he had fallen asleep, they, out of spite chopped all the flowers and branches off the aśoka tree.

After some time the king awoke; his eyes immediately fell on his dismembered tree.

“Who did this?” he asked his servants who were standing nearby.

“Your majesty’s concubines,” they answered.

On learning this, Aśoka flew into a rage and burned the five hundred women alive.19 When the people saw all these vicious acts of the king, they concluded he was fearsome by temperament, and gave him the name “Aśoka the Fierce” (Caṇḍāśoka).

Rādhagupta, the prime minister, therefore, spoke to him: “Your majesty, it is not seemly for you yourself to do what is improper; why don’t you appoint some royal executioners, men who will carry out the necessary killings for the king?”

So Aśoka told his men to go and find him an executioner.

Now, not too far away, in a small village at the foot of the mountains, there lived a weaver who had a son named Girika. Fearsome and evil-minded, the boy reviled his mother and father, and beat up the other boys and girls. With nets and hooks, he caught and killed ants, flies, mice, and fish. He was a ferocious youth and so people called him “Girika the Fierce” (Caṇḍāgirika).

When the king’s men saw him engaged in these wicked deeds, they asked him: “Are you able to be King Aśoka’s executioner?”

“I could execute the whole of Jambudvīpa!” was his answer.

Aśoka was informed of this, and he ordered him brought to the capital. The king’s men said to Girika: “Come, the king has summoned you.”

18 Yantramayo hastin: literally an “elephant made of yantras,” that is, mechanical contrivances, apparatus, machines. Compare Przyluski, La légende, p. 234, “un éléphant mécanique.”

19 Literally, “he wrapped them in kitika and burned them.” The meaning of kitika is very obscure, and is associated with both the notion of clothing and hot copper plates. It seems to have been some sort of covering used in torture. See Edgerton, Dictionary, s. v.
"You go along," he replied, "I must first go and see my mother and father."

He asked his parents for permission to leave, saying: "Mother, Father, I will become King Aśoka's executioner!" But they would not let him go. Therefore, he killed them both, and rejoined the king's men. When the latter asked him why he had been delayed, he told them everything that had happened.

Then they took Girika to King Aśoka. The first thing he did was to ask the king to have a building made for his purposes. Aśoka had one built immediately; it was lovely from the outside as far as the gate, but inside it was actually a very frightful place, and people called it "the beautiful gaol."

Candagirika then said: "Your majesty, grant me this wish—that whosoever should enter this place should not come out alive." And the king agreed to his demand.

Soon thereafter, Candagirika went to the Kukurārāma where he heard a monk reciting the "Balaṇḍita Sūtra."20

"There are beings who are reborn in hell, and the hell-guardians grab them, and stretch them out on their backs on a fiery floor of red-hot iron that is but a mass of flames. They pry open their jaws with an iron bar and pour fiery balls of red-hot iron into their open mouths. These sear their lips, scorch their tongue and throat and gullet, their heart and the area around it, and passing through their entrails and intestines, flow out down below. Truly, O monks, such are the sufferings of hell.

"There are other beings who are reborn in hell, and the hell-guardians grab them and stretch them out on their backs on a fiery floor of red-hot iron that is but a mass of flames. They pry open their mouths with an iron bar and pour boiling copper down their throats. It burns their lips; it scorches their tongue and palate and throat and gullet and entrails and intestines, and finally flows out down below. Truly, O monks, such are the sufferings of hell.

"And there are beings who are reborn in hell whom the hell-guardians grab and throw on their faces on a fiery floor of red-hot iron that is but a mass of flames. They mark them with a chalk line of searing hot iron,21 and with a burning, blazing, flaming, fiery axe, they hack and chop and chisel them from above and from below, with both powerful and soft strokes, and turn them into an octagon, a hexagon, a square, an oval, and finally a circle. Truly, O monks, such are the sufferings of hell.

"Then there are beings who are reborn in hell whom the hell-guardians grab and throw on their faces on a fiery floor of red-hot iron that is but a mass of flames. They mark them with a chalk line of searing hot iron, and on an iron floor which is on fire but not a mass of flames, they hack and chop and chisel them from above and from below, with both powerful and soft strokes, and make them into an octagon, a hexagon, a square and a circle. Truly, O monks, such are the sufferings of hell.

"Finally, there are beings who are reborn in hell whom the hell-guardians grab, and stretch out on their backs on a fiery floor of red-hot iron that is but a mass of flames. Then they carry out the torture of the five-fold tether; they drive two iron stakes through their hands; they drive two iron stakes through their feet; and they drive one iron stake through their heart. Truly, O monks, hell is a place of great suffering."

"Such are the five great agonies," Candagirika reflected, and he began to inflict these same torments on people in his prison.

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21 Ayomaya sūtra: literally "a cord made out of iron." On the bell of the black cord (kālāsūtra) and the use of that cord as a carpenter's chalk-line, see Paul Mus, La lumière sur les six voies, Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, no. 35 (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1939), p. 79.
SAMUDRA AND AŚOKA'S CONVERSION

Now in those days, there lived in Śrāvasti a merchant who, along with his wife, embarked on a journey across the great ocean. While at sea, his wife gave birth to a son and he was given the name Samudra (“Ocean”). When, after twelve years, the merchant returned from his travels, he was robbed and killed by five hundred brigands. His son, Samudra, then entered the Buddhist order, and wandering throughout the land he arrived one day at Pātaliputra. Early in the morning, he dressed in his robes, took his bowl, and entered the city for alms. Unknowingly, he approached the mansion that was lovely from the outside—at least as far as the gateway. When he saw the terrifying interior like the abode of hell, he wanted to go right out again, but Caṇḍagarīka stopped him.

“In this place,” he said, “you will meet your doom; it is all over for you!”

Samudra was overcome by sorrow and started to cry.

“Why do you weep like a baby?” Caṇḍagarīka demanded.

The monk answered:

Kind sir, I do not grieve
for the destruction of the body,
but I greatly mourn the disruption
of the elements leading to my liberation.
Having attained this hard-to-reach existence,
and entered the religious life that gives rise to bliss,
and had as my teacher the lion of the Śākyas,
I am now sadly going to lose them all again.

Caṇḍagarīka said: “The king has given me the right to execute all those who enter here. You had better be steadfast because for you there won’t be any emancipation!”

Then, pleading for compassion, Samudra begged for a month’s stay of execution. He was granted seven days; and shuddering with the fear of death, he wrestled with the thought that in a week’s time he would be no more.

Now early on the seventh day, King Aśoka happened to see one of his concubines conversing with and gazing lovingly at a youth with whom she was enamored. As soon as he saw them together, he became furious and sent them both to the gaol. There they were ground with pestles in an iron mortar until only their bones remained.

Samudra was thoroughly shaken by the sight of this event and exclaimed:

Aha! The Great Sage, the compassionate Teacher was right when he likened the body to a bubble of foam, worthless and unstable.
Where now is that lovely face?
Where has that beautiful body gone?
Woe unto this inconstant world of suffering wherein fools take their pleasure.
In this gaol I have come to the fundamental realization that today will enable me to cross the ocean of existence.

And applying himself the whole night through to the Teaching of the Buddha, he broke the bonds of existence and attained supreme arhatship.

At dawn, Caṇḍagarīka said: “Monk, the night has gone, the sun has risen, the time of your torture has come!”
And Samudra replied: “Indeed, my night has gone, and the sun that marks the time of highest favor has risen! You may do whatever you wish, my long-lived friend.”

“I don’t understand,” said Caṇḍagarīka, “please explain your words.”

And Samudra said:

Gone from my heart is the dreadful night of delusion, blanketed by the Five Obscurations,

22 The Five Obscurations (pañcāvaraṇa) are: sensuality, ill-will, torpor, worry, and wavering.
teeming with the thief-like defilements.
Risen is the bright sun of knowledge in the sky of my
mind;
by its light I can see this three-fold world as it truly is.
I am following the practice of the Master;
this is for me the time of highest favor.
Do what you will to this body, O long-lived one!

Thereupon, that unmerciful monster, feeling no pity in his
heart and indifferent to the other world, threw Samudra into
an iron cauldron full of water, human blood, marrow, urine,
and excrement. He lit a great fire underneath, but even after
much firewood had been consumed, the cauldron did not get
hot. Once more, he tried to light the fire, but again it would
not blaze. He became puzzled, and looking into the pot, he
saw the monk seated there, cross-legged on a lotus. Straight-
away, he sent word to King Ašoka. Ašoka came to witness
this marvel, and thousands of people gathered, and Samudra,
seated in the cauldron, realized that the time for Ašoka’s con-
version was at hand.

He began to generate his supernatural powers. In the pres-
ence of the crowd of onlookers, he flew up to the firmament,
and, wet from the water like a swan, he started to display
various magical feats.
As it is said:

From half of his body, water poured down;
from the other half, fire blazed forth.
Raining and flaming, he shone in the sky
like a mountain, whose streams flowed down
from the midst of fiery herbs. 21

At the sight of the sky-walker, the king’s mouth hung open
in astonishment. Gazing upwards, making an añjali, he said
in great wonderment:

21 The association of herbs or grasses with fire is a commonplace of Indian
poetic imagery.

I have something I wish to ask you, friend;
your form is like that of a man
but your magical powers are not human;
therefore I cannot decide what to call you,
O Mighty One, O Pure One, or what your nature is.
Please enlighten me now on this matter,
so that I may understand your power, and act as your
disciple,
coming to know the might and qualities of your Dharma,
in so far as I am able.

Then the monk, realizing that Ašoka would completely
comprehend the Teaching, would distribute the Blessed One’s
relics and assure the well-being of the multitudes, explained
to him his qualities:

O king, I am a son of the compassionate Buddha,
that most eloquent of speakers,
who has cut through the tangles
of worldly inclinations.
A follower of Dharma,
I am detached from all modes of existence.
Subdued by the Subdued One, the best of men,
I was shown tranquility
by the One who found quietude.
I was released from the bonds of being
by the One who is free from the terrors of saṃsāra.

“Moreover, great king, with reference to you, the Blessed
One predicted that one hundred years after his parinirvāṇa
there would be in the city of Pāṭaliputra a king named Ašoka,
a caṇkaraśā in ruling over one of the four continents, a right-
eous dharmaśā in who would distribute his bodily relics far
and wide, and build the eighty-four thousand dharmaśāśikās.
But instead your majesty has built this place that resembles a
hell and where thousands of living beings have been killed.
Your highness, you should give to all beings a promise of security and completely fulfill the wish of the Blessed One.”
And he added:
O chief of men, grant security to all beings,
for they are attendant to compassion.
Fulfill the wish of the Lord and
distribute far and wide the dharma-bearers.24

Now the king’s faith in the Buddha was aroused and cupping his hands together out of respect, he implored the monk Samudra, saying:
O son of the Daśabala, please forgive me this evil deed.
Today, I confess it to you and seek refuge
in that Sage, the Buddha, in the best of sects,
and in the Dharma that is taught by the Noble ones.

Furthermore:

Because of my faith in the Blessed One,
because of his venerability,
I resolve today to adorn the earth
with the chief of Jinas’ caityas
that are as white as the conch, the moon, and the crane.

Then Samudra departed from that place by means of his supernatural powers. [Aśoka too made ready to leave] but just as he was about to go, Caṇḍāgirika, making an añjali, said: “Your majesty, you granted me a wish—that no one at all should leave this place alive!”

“What?” said the king, “you want to put me to death too?”
“Just so,” replied Caṇḍāgirika.
“But which one of us,” asked Aśoka, “entered this place first?”
“I did,” admitted Caṇḍāgirika.

24 Dharmadhara, a word that usually is taken to mean missionary, but here probably indicates a stūpa, a relic holder. See Sujitkumar Mukhopadhyaya, ed., The Aśokavadī (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1963), p. 167.

Aśoka therefore summoned his guard. They seized Caṇḍāgirika and took him away to the torture chamber where he was burned to death. And the beautiful gaol was then torn down, and a guarantee of security extended to all beings.

THE 84,000 STŪPAS

Then King Aśoka, intending to distribute far and wide the bodily relics of the Blessed One, went together with a fourfold army to the drona stūpa that Ajātaśatru had built. He broke it open, took out all the relics, and putting back a portion of them, set up a new stūpa. He did the same with the second drona stūpa and so on up to the seventh one, removing the relics from each of them and then setting up new stūpas as tokens of his devotion. Then he proceeded to Rāmagrama. There the nāgas took him down to the nāga palace and told him: “We here pay homage to our drona stūpa.” Aśoka, therefore, let them keep their relics intact, and the nāga king himself escorted him back up from the palace.

Indeed as it is said:

Today in Rāmagrama the eighth stūpa stands
for in those days the nāgas guarded it with devotion.
The king did not take the relics from there
but left them alone and, full of faith, withdrew.

Then Aśoka had eighty-four thousand boxes made of gold, silver, cat’s eye, and crystal, and in them were placed the relics. Also, eighty-four thousand urns and eighty-four thousand inscription plates25 were prepared. All of this was given to the yakṣas for distribution in the [eighty-four thousand] dharmarājikās he ordered built throughout the earth as far as the surrounding ocean, in the small, great, and middle-sized towns.

25 Paṭra. Burnouf translates it literally as “cloth strips” (to hold on the lids of the urns), but see Monier Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), s.v.
wherever there was a [population of] one hundred thousand [persons].

Now in those days, in the city of Takṣaśilā, there were thirty-six hundred thousand [people]; they therefore requested thirty-six boxes of relics. Aśoka realized he could not agree to this if the relics were to be distributed far and wide. He was, however, a master of clever means; he announced that [since he could not give the Takṣaśilans more than one share of the relics], he would have to have thirty-five hundred thousand of them executed. [They quickly withdrew their demand.] Later, Aśoka formally proclaimed that no additional relics were to be given where there were more than one hundred thousand [people], and none at all where there were fewer than that.

Aśoka then went to the Kukkuṭārāma Monastery and spoke to the elder Yaśas: “This is my wish; I would like to complete the building of all eighty-four thousand dharmarājikās on the same day, at the same time.”

“Well,” replied the elder, “when the moment comes, I shall signal it by hiding the orb of the sun with my hand.” Then, not long thereafter, he eclipsed the sun with his hand, and all at once the eighty-four thousand dharmarājikās were completed.

As it is said:

From those seven reliquaries of old
the Mauryan took away the relics of the Sage,
and built on this earth in one day
eighty-four thousand stupas,
resplendent as the autumn clouds.

26 Burnouf (Introduction, p. 332) reads this as “wherever one hundred thousand gold pieces had been amassed,” but the Chinese text and other sources make it clear that the figure refers to population and not to wealth. See Przyluski, La légende, p. 243, and Thomas Watters, On Yuan Chwang’s Travels in India, 2 vols. (orig. pub., 1905; rpt. Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1961), 2:92.

Now when King Aśoka had completed the eighty-four thousand dharmarājikās, he became a righteous dharmarāja, and thenceforth was known as “Dharmāśoka.”

As it is said:

For the benefit of beings throughout the world
the noble Maurya built stupas.
He had been known as “Aśoka the Fierce”;
by this act he became “Aśoka the Righteous.”

The Legend of Vītaśoka

Shortly after the completion of the eighty-four thousand dharmarājikās, in the days when King Aśoka had recently acquired faith in the Teaching of the Blessed One, he celebrated a quinquennial festival (pañcauṣṭika) in which he provided food for three hundred thousand monks, one hundred thousand of whom were arhats, and two hundred thousand of whom were virtuous ordinary disciples. And by and large, throughout the world, as far as the surrounding ocean, people became favorably disposed toward the Buddhist order.

However, Aśoka’s brother, whose name was Vītaśoka, was favorably disposed toward the heretics. They had prejudiced him, claiming: “There can be no liberation for the Buddhist monks for they delight in comfort and are averse to strenuous efforts.”

Some time later when King Aśoka was hunting in the forest, Vītaśoka [who had accompanied him] came across a Brahmanical ascetic who knew the value of severe austerities and was performing the penance of the five fires.

He went up to the rṣī, prostrated himself at his feet, and asked: “Blessed One, how long have you been dwelling here in the forest?”

“Twelve years,” was the reply.

“What do you eat?” Vītaśoka asked.

“Fruits and roots,” said the rṣī.
from prostrating my body before these monks.
You have not examined the matter,
are always reckoning “I am the best,”
and have become blind with delusion.
A wise man who considers the body
in the light of the Buddha's Teachings
does not perceive any bodily differences
between a prince and a slave.
Skin, flesh, bones, head, and liver,
as well as the other organs,
are common to all men.
Only removable ornaments make
one body “better” than another.
The wise in this world make merit
by getting up, bowing down, and performing
other acts of obeisance,
relying on this most vile body,
hoping for the essence.

The Meeting of Aśoka and Upagupta

Now King Aśoka knew that although the body was even
more worthless than ground-up eggshells mixed with sand,
the rewards of prostration and other bodily acts of worship
were greater than dominion for many aeons over the whole
world from Mount Meru to the outer ocean.
He therefore wished to prepare himself in order to pay even
greater honors to the stūpas of the Blessed One. With his
entourage of ministers, he went to the Kukkutārāma, and, standing before the elders, he made an añjali and asked:

Did the All-Seeing Buddha make
a prediction about anyone else
just as he made one about me,
at the time of my gift of dirt?

Yaśas, the elder of the community, answered: “Yes, he did,
great king. Around the time of his parinirvāna, after he had
converted the nāga Apālāha, the potter, the outcaste woman,
Gopāli, and the snake, the Blessed One went to Mathurā.
There he said to the Venerable Ananda: ‘Ānanda, right here
in Mathurā, one hundred years after the Tathāgata has gone
to parinirvāna, there will live a perfumer named Gupta. He
will have a son named Upagupta who, in those days, will
become the best of preachers, a Buddha without the marks
who will carry on the work of a Buddha.’
And he asked Ānanda: ‘Do you see over there that dark
line on the horizon?’
‘Yes, your reverence.’
‘That, Ānanda, is the mountain called Urumuṇḍa where
one hundred years after the Tathāgata has gone to parinirvāna
there will be a forest hermitage called the Naṭabhaṭṭika. Of all
the places where the beds and seats are conducive to medita-
tion, Ānanda, it will be the best.’

As it is said:
The most excellent of preachers—
glorious Upagupta—
the Lord of the World has predicted
he will do the work of a Buddha.

Aśoka then said to Yaśas: “Tell me, is this saintly being,
this Upagupta, alive today, or has he not yet been born?”
“He is alive,” the elder replied, “this magnanimous being
who has triumphed over the defilements. For the sake of this
world in need of compassion, he resides even now on Mount
Urumuṇḍa, at the head of a circle of arhats. Furthermore,
your majesty:

This pure being who enjoys omniscience
now preaches the most excellent Dharma
to the best of flocks,
guiding gods, demon-chiefs, snakes, and men
by the thousands to the city of liberation.”

Indeed, at that time, the Venerable Upagupta was dwelling
at the Naṭabhaṭṭika hermitage with a following of eighteen
Aśoka summoned his ministers and said:

Equip an escort of elephants, chariots, and horses, and I will go quickly to Mount Uruμuṇḍa to see with my own eyes the noble arhat Upagupta who is free from all evil inclinations.

Aśoka's ministers, however, said: "Your majesty, you ought not to go yourself, but send a messenger to Mount Uruμuṇḍa and ask the sage who lives there to come and see you!"

To this Aśoka replied: "He is not someone who should have to come to us, but we should go to him! "Moreover:

I think that Upagupta's body is made of vajra, harder than a rock.
He is a man like the Master, and could well refuse an order."

And without further ado, Aśoka sent a messenger to the elder Upagupta to tell him he was coming to see him.

The elder, however, reflected that if the king did come, it would be difficult to find provisions for the large number of men in his escort; he therefore announced that he would go to the capital himself.

Aśoka, thinking Upagupta would come by boat, then provided a ferry for his passage from Mathurā to Pāṭaliputra. As a favor to the king, the elder agreed to board the boat, and accompanied by eighteen thousand arhats, he soon reached the capital.

The king's men then announced this to Aśoka: "Rejoice, your majesty! As a favor to you, that master of the mind, that helmsman of the Teaching, Upagupta, has arrived standing at the head of his followers who have all crossed over to the other shore of the stream of existence."

Aśoka then had the city decorated [for the elder's arrival]. Along with all the citizens and his officers of state, he went two and a half yojanas out of town to meet him and to welcome him with every kind of musical instrument and every variety of garland, perfume, and blossom.

While still a way off, Aśoka saw the elder with his eighteen thousand arhats gathered around him in a semi-circle. Fortieth, he alighted from his elephant and proceeded to the riverside on foot. There, he stood with one foot on shore and the other on board the boat, and, clasping the elder in his arms, he lifted him from the ship on to the dry land.

He then fell full-length in front of Upagupta like a tree felled at the root. He kissed his feet, got up, and then knelt down on the ground again. Making an añjali and gazing up at the elder, he said:

When I had cut down the enemy hosts and placed the earth and its mountains ringed by the sea under a single umbrella of sovereignty, my joy was not then what it is now.
that I have seen you, O elder.
The sight of you has doubled my faith
in this most excellent order.
Looking at you today I see in you
the incomparable Self-Existing Pure One,
even though he is gone beyond.

Furthermore:

Now that the compassionate Jina has gone to rest,
you carry on the work of a Buddha in this Triple World.
Now that he has disappeared and closed his eyes
on this world of delusion,
you, like the sun, shine with the light of knowledge.
You are like the Master, the one eye of the world,
the foremost of preachers, a refuge.
O mighty one, tell me what to do and I will quickly,
this very day, carry out your command, O pure being.

Then the elder Upagupta blessed the king with his right hand, and said:

You have established your sovereignty, O lord,
keep on ruling conscientiously,
and always honor the precious Triple Gem.

"Furthermore, great king, the Blessed Tathāgata Arhat, the
completely enlightened Buddha, that most excellent charioteer
of beings, has entrusted us—you and me—with the safe keeping
of his Teaching which we are to maintain diligently in the
midst of his flock."

"Elder," said Aśoka, "I have carried out everything that the
Blessed One foretold I would do:

I distributed his reliquaries
and beautified the earth everywhere
with mountain-like stūpas of many colors,
with lofty banners and bejewelled parasols.
Then the elder, in order to cheer up the king, said:

Great king, behold the greatness of the field
in which the dirt was planted!
It brought you royal splendor
and unsurpassed sovereignty!

Hearing this, Aśoka’s eyes grew wide with amazement. He called his ministers and said:

I was rewarded with the kingship of a balacakravartin
simply because of a gift of dirt!
You should spare no effort, sirs,
in honoring the Blessed One.

AŚOKA’S PILGRIMAGE

The king then fell at the feet of the elder Upagupta and said: “Elder, I want to honor the places where the Blessed One lived, and mark them with signs as a favor to posterity.”

“Excellent, great king,” Upagupta replied, “your intention is magnificent. I will show you the sites this very day.”

[And he added:]

The places where the Blessed One lived
we will honor with folded hands,
and mark them with signs
so that there will be no doubt.

Then Aśoka equipped a fourfold army, procured perfumes, garlands, and flowers, and set out with the elder Upagupta.

First, Upagupta took him to the Lumbini Wood, and stretching out his right hand he said: “In this place, great king, the Blessed One was born.”

And he added:

This is the first of the caityas
of the Buddha whose eye is supreme.
Here, as soon as he was born,

82 the Sage took seven steps on the earth
looked down at the four directions,
and spoke these words:
“This is my last birth
I’ll not dwell in a womb again.”

Aśoka threw himself at Upagupta’s feet, and getting up, he said, weeping and making an añjali:

They are fortunate and of great merit
those who witnessed
the birth of the Sage
and heard his delightful voice.

Now for the sake of further increasing the king’s faith, the elder asked Aśoka whether he would like to see the deity

who witnessed in this wood the birth
of the most eloquent Sage,
saw him take the seven steps,
and heard the words he spoke.

Aśoka replied that he would. Upagupta, therefore, stretched out his right hand toward the tree whose branch Queen Mahāmāyā had grasped while giving birth, and declared:

Let the divine maiden who resides in this aśoka tree
and who witnessed the birth of the Buddha
make herself manifest in her own body
so that King Aśoka’s faith will grow greater still.

And immediately, the tree spirit appeared before Upagupta in her own form, and said, making an añjali:

Elder, what is your command?

The elder said to Aśoka: “Great king, here is the goddess
who saw the Buddha at the time of his birth.”

Aśoka said to her, making an añjali:
You witnessed his birth and saw
his body adorned with the marks!
You gazed upon his large lotus-like eyes!
You heard in this wood
the first delightful words
of the leader of mankind!

The tree spirit replied:
I did indeed witness the birth of the best of men,
the Teacher who dazzled like gold.
I saw him take the seven steps,
and also heard his words.

"Tell me, goddess," said Aśoka, "what was it like—the
magnificent moment of the Blessed One’s birth?"
"I cannot possibly fully describe it in words," answered the
deity, "but, in brief, listen:

Throughout Indra’s three-fold world,
there shone a supernatural light,
dazzling like gold and delighting the eye.
The earth and its mountains,
ringed by the ocean,
shook like a ship being tossed at sea.”

Hearing this, Aśoka made an offering of one hundred thou-
sand pieces of gold to the birthplace of the Buddha, built a
cāitya there, and went on.

The elder Umapuja then took him to Kapilavastu. “Great
king,” he declared, stretching out his right hand, “in this place
here, the bodhisattva was brought before his father, King
Śuddhodana. Seeing that his son’s perfect body was adorned
with the thirty-two marks of the Great Man, he prostrated
himself full length at his feet.

“And this, great king, is the ancestral temple of the Śākya
clan, called the Śākyavardha. The bodhisattva was brought
here soon after his birth so that he could worship the gods,

but instead all the deities fell at the bodhisattva’s feet. King
Śuddhodana declared that his son was a god even for the
gods, and so gave him the name: ‘Devātideva.’

“In this place, great king, the bodhisattva was shown to
the learned Brahmin fortunetellers; and over here, the sage
Asita predicted that he would become a Buddha in this world.

“In this place, great king, he was reared by Mahāprajāpati;
here he was taught how to write; and here he became a master
of the arts appropriate to his lineage such as riding an ele-
phant, a horse, or a chariot, handling a bow, grasping a jav-
elin, and using an elephant hook. And this was the gymnasium
where the bodhisattva trained. And in this place, great king,
the bodhisattva, surrounded by a hundred thousand deities,
pursued pleasure with sixty thousand women.

“In this place, upset over the sight of an old man, a sick
man and a corpse, the bodhisattva went out to the woods;
and over here he sat down in the shade of a jambu tree, and
ridding himself of evil and negative elements, he attained the
first level of trance, a joyful and blissful state free from evil
inclinations, born of discrimination, and characterized by rea-
son and reflection. And when it was afternoon and the meal-
time was past, the lengthening shadows of the trees slanted
towards the east, but the shadow of the jambu tree did not
leave the body of the bodhisattva. And witnessing this, King
Śuddhodana once again fell full length at the bodhisattva’s
feet.

“Through this gateway over here, the bodhisattva left Ka-
ilavastu at midnight, surrounded by a hundred thousand
deities; and here he sent his horse and his ornaments back
with Chandaka.”

And he added:

In this place he made Chandaka return
with the horse and the ornaments,
and all by himself, without an attendant,
he entered the forest of asceticism.
“In this place, the bodhisattva gave his clothes of Benares silk to a hunter in exchange for a yellow robe, and began his ascetic practice. Here the potter invited the bodhisattva to his hermitage; here King Bimbisāra offered him half of his kingdom; and here he met Āraṇa and Udraka.”

As it is said:

In the forest of asceticism, the Noble Being, that Indra among men, studied and practiced austerities under the tīṣa Udraka and Āraṇa.

“In this place, the bodhisattva practiced self-mortification for six years.”

And he added:

For six long years, the great Sage undertook fierce austerities, and then gave them up realizing this was not the way to highest knowledge.

“In this place, Nandā and Nandabalā, the daughters of a village headman, offered the bodhisattva sweetened milk-rice which had been condensed sixteen times.”

And he added:

Here the most eloquent Great Hero enjoyed Nandā’s sweetened milk-rice, and then set out for the seat of enlightenment.


32 Apparently these two daughters are the same as Sujātā, who is usually portrayed as the one offering the milk-rice. See Edgerton, Dictionary, s.v. Nandabalā.

“...”

“Aśoka’s Pilgrimage

“In this place, the bodhisattva, on his way to the Bodhi tree, was praised by the nāga king, Kālika.”

And he added:

Coming along this path toward the seat of enlightenment where he sought immortality, the most eloquent of men was praised by Kālika, chief of serpents.

Then Aśoka fell at the elder Upagupta’s feet, and making an añjali, he said:

I would like to meet the nāga king who saw the Tathāgata walking along this path as unstoppable as an elephant bull in rut.

And immediately, Kālika the nāga king appeared before Upagupta and said, making an añjali: “Elder, what is your command?”

Upagupta said to King Aśoka: “This, your majesty, is Kālika, the nāga king who praised the Blessed One while he was heading along this path toward the Bodhi tree.

Aśoka said to the nāga, making an añjali:

You saw my peerless Master, his complexion like blazing gold and his face like the autumn moon. Recount for me some of the Buddha’s qualities; tell me what it was like—the splendor of the Sugata.

“I am unable fully to describe it in words,” replied Kālika, “but, in brief, listen:

Beneath his feet, the whole earth and its mountain ranges trembled in six different ways.
The Sugata shone on the world of men.
like a beautiful never-waning moon,
surpassing the sun in splendor."

Now when the king had built a caitya at that spot, the elder Upagupta led him to the foot of the Bodhi tree, stretched out his right hand and said: "In this place, great king, the bodhisattva first defeated the forces of Māra with the power of his loving kindness, and then completely realized total unsurpassed enlightenment."

And he added:

Here at the seat of enlightenment
the greatest of sages dispersed
and quickly repelled the forces of Namuci [Māra]
And here that peerless individual
attained everlasting, exalted,
supreme enlightenment.

And hearing this the king made an offering of one hundred thousand pieces of gold to the Bodhi tree and built a caitya there.

They went on, and after a while the elder Upagupta stopped and said to Aśoka: "In this place, the Blessed One received from the celestial guardians of the four quarters four stone begging bowls which he joined into a single bowl. Over here, the merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika made him an offering of alms food. And here the Blessed One, on his way to Benares, was praised by the Ājivika Upaga."33

Then Upagupta led Aśoka to Ikṣipatana, and stretching out his right hand he declared: "In this place, great king, the Blessed One set in motion the holy Wheel of the Dharma, which in three turns thrice teaches the Four Noble Truths."

And he added:

The great, wise, most compassionate Sage
converted everyone to the eternal Dharma and Vinaya—
gods, men, asuras, yakṣas, and nāgas.
Then he went to rest, his mind at ease,
because there was no one left for him to convert.

Hearing these words, Aśoka collapsed on the ground in a faint. His attendants splashed some water in his face, and as soon as he had somewhat regained consciousness, he made an offering of a hundred thousand pieces of gold to the site of the parinirvāṇa, and built a caitya there.

32 On this episode, see ibid., pp. 331-42.
33 Most certainly the great miracle of Śrāvasti.
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THE STūPAS OF THE BUDDHA’S DISCIPLES

He then fell at Upagupta’s feet and said: “Elder, I wish also to pay homage to the bodily relics of those disciples whom the Blessed One declared to be foremost [in some quality].”

“Excellent, great king,” the elder replied, “your intention is splendid!” And he took Aśoka to the Jetavana. There, he stretched out his right hand and said: “This, great king, is the stūpa of the elder Śāriputra who is worthy of praise.”

“What were his virtues?” asked Aśoka.

“The Blessed One,” replied Upagupta, “called him the foremost of the wise, a second master, commander of the army of Dharma who keeps the Dharma Wheel rolling. No one in the whole world, excepting the Tathāgata, has as much as a sixteenth of Śāriputra’s wisdom.”

And he added:

The supreme Wheel of the Good Dharma
which the Jina set in motion
was kept rolling
by Śāriputra the Wise.
Who in this world, other than the Buddha,
would ever know how to count the virtues
of the son of Śāradvatī
and be able to describe them completely?

Aśoka then, with heartfelt joy, made an offering of one hundred thousand pieces of gold to the stūpa of the elder Śāradvatīputra and, making an añjali, he said:

Devoutly I praise great Śāradvatīputra,
the wisest of the wise,
who is free from attachment to existence,
and whose glory lights up the whole world.

The list of these may be found in the Anguttara Nikāya. See F. L. Woodward and E. M. Hare, tr., The Book of Gradual Sayings (Anguttara Nikāya), 5 vols., Pali Text Society Translation Series, nos. 22, 24-27 (London: Pali Text Society, 1932-36), 1:16-22.

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Then the elder Upagupta pointed out the stūpa of Mahāmaudgalyāyana and declared: “This, great king, is the stūpa of the elder Mahāmaudgalyāyana who is worthy of praise.”

“What were his virtues?” asked Aśoka.

“The Blessed One,” replied Upagupta, “called him the foremost of those who have supernatural powers. He subdued the nāga kings Nanda and Upananda, and with the big toe of his right foot he shook Vaijayanta, the palace of Śakra, Indra of the gods.”

And he added:

Zealously honor Kolita,
the best of the twice-born,
who set a-trembling Śakra’s abode
with his big right toe.
Who in this world could ever fathom
the ocean of merits of the pure-minded One
who subdued the fearful snake lords
most difficult to tame?

Then Aśoka made an offering of one hundred thousand pieces of gold to the stūpa of the elder Mahāmaudgalyāyana,
and making an añjali, he said:

Head bowed, I honor the celebrated Maudgalyāyana,
foremost of those who have supernatural powers.
He has escaped from birth,
old age, sorrow, and suffering.

Then the elder Upagupta pointed out the stūpa of Mahākāśyapa, and declared: “This, great king, is the stūpa of the elder Mahākāśyapa who is worthy of praise.”

“What were his virtues?” asked Aśoka.

“The Blessed One,” replied Upagupta, “called this magnanimous disciple the foremost of those who have few desires, are quite contented and advocate the qualities of the purified.”

For a list of these qualities, see Edgerton, Dictionary, s.v. dhūra-guṇa.
Furthermore, he invited him to share his seat, and clothed him in his faded robe. Accepting misery and poverty, this disciple held the community together."

And he added:

A lofty field of merit,
a kindly sage who welcomes misery and poverty,
who wore the robe of the Omniscient One
and united the community—
who is able to describe fully
the qualities of this guru
with whom the benevolent Jina
shared the best of seats?

Then Aśoka made an offering of one hundred thousand pieces of gold to the stūpa of the elder Mahākāśyapa, and said, making an añjali:

I honor the elder Kāśyapa
who dwells hidden inside the mountain;39
serene, his face turned away from strife, devoted to
tranquility,
he has fully developed the virtue of contentedness.

Then the elder Upagupta pointed out the stūpa of Batkula,40 and declared: "This, great king, is the stūpa of the elder Batkula, who is worthy of praise."

"What were his virtues?" asked Aśoka.

"The Blessed One," replied Upagupta, "called this magnanimous disciple the foremost of those who seldom get sick.

Moreover, [he was so aloof that] he never preached so much as a single two-line stanza to anyone."

Aśoka said: "Make an offering of a penny here."

Hearing this, his ministers immediately asked: "Your majesty, why have you changed the pattern you established by your offerings to the other stūpas and given only a penny to this one?"

"Let me tell you the reason," the king answered.

Even though he managed,
with the lamp of perfect knowledge,
completely to dispel the darkness
housed in his mind,

he had so few desires that he did not act
as others did for the benefit of all mankind.

The ministers were amazed. They fell at Aśoka’s feet and said in awe: "Aho! Although this magnanimous being lacked desires, he unfortunately also lacked purpose."

Finally, the elder Upagupta pointed out the stūpa of Ānanda and declared: "This, great king, is the stūpa of the elder Ānanda, who is worthy of praise."

"What were his virtues?" asked Aśoka.

"He was," replied Upagupta, "the Blessed One’s personal attendant. He was the foremost of those who had listened to the Teaching a great deal and was the preserver of the Buddha’s word."

And he added:

Diligently guarding the bowl of the Sage,
firm in his recollection, his resolution and reflection,
an ocean of oral tradition is good Ānanda.
His sweet words are perfectly clear,
and he is honored by gods and men.
Thoroughly familiar with the thoughts of the Buddha,
clearsighted, a basket of virtues,
praised by the Jina is good Ānanda.

39 A reference to the legend that Mahākāśyapa disappeared at death into a mountain where he remains in a meditative trance and from where he will emerge at the time of the future Buddha Maitreya. See Lamotte, *Histoire*, p. 778.

Victorious over evil inclinations,
he is honored by gods and men.

Then Aśoka made an offering of ten million pieces of gold
to Ānanda's stūpa.
"Your majesty," his ministers asked, "why do you honor
this disciple above all others?"
"Let me tell you the reason," said the king:

He whose name means "the cessation of sorrow" should
be honored in a special way,
because he attended to the dharmic body
of the most eloquent master who himself is the Dharma.
It is because of this son of the great Sugata
that the lamp of Dharma still burns today
and dispels the darkness of defilements in all beings.
The waters contained in the ocean
would never have fit in a cow's hoofprint;
it was after recognizing this elder's dharmic capacity
that the Lord consecrated him as sūtra-master.

Now after honoring the stūpas of all the elders, Aśoka fell
at Upagupta's feet and said, with heartfelt joy:

I have profited from the human condition I attained
by making hundreds of offerings.
With the vacillating powers of royal sovereignty,
I have grasped the supreme essence (sāra).
I have ornamented this world with hundreds of caityas
resplendent as cumulus clouds.
In fulfilling today the Teaching of the peerless Master
have I not done the difficult to do?

And after saying this, Aśoka took his leave of the elder
Upagupta.

41 "Ānanda" more literally refers to bliss or happiness. "Cessation of sorrow" is a better etymology for "Aśoka!"
nents, and that you would distribute his reliquaries far and wide and build the eighty-four thousand dharmarājikās."

And he added:

When you with childish faith
put a handful of dirt
in the Buddha’s dish
I too was there at that time.

Aśoka then asked Piṇḍola: “Elder where are you living now?”

He replied:

O king, I dwell on Mount Gandhamādana
to the north of the best of lakes
with fellow followers of the religious life.

The king asked:

How large is your following?

The elder answered:

O chief of men, I live with an entourage
of sixty-thousand saints.
They are free from longing
and have conquered sin.

“However, great king, why ask all these questions? Let the community of monks be served, then when they have finished eating, I will say a few words of greeting to them.”

“So be it,” said the king, “however, with the recollection of the Buddha fresh in my mind, I first want to bathe the Bodhi tree; then, immediately afterwards I will offer a pleasing meal to the community.”

Aśoka then summoned Sarvamitra, the crier, and told him:

“I want to make an offering of a hundred thousand pieces of gold to the community of āryas, and bathe the Bodhi tree with a thousand pots of scented water. Proclaim in my name a great quinquennial festival!”

THE QUINQUENNIAL FESTIVAL

Now at that time Kunāla’s eyes had not yet been put out. He was standing a bit to the right of the king, [his father. When Aśoka announced his offering] he said nothing but threw up two fingers, declaring by this gesture that he would give twice that amount. Seeing Kunāla thus increasing the size of the offering by a hand signal, the whole crowd roared with laughter.

The king too burst out laughing and said “Aho! Rādhagupta, who brought about this increase?”

Rādhagupta answered: “Your majesty, there are many living beings who want to make merit; you were outbid by one of them.”

“Well then,” said the king, “I will give three times a hundred thousand pieces of gold to the community of āryas, and will bathe the Bodhi tree with three thousand pots of scented water. Proclaim in my name a great quinquennial festival!”

But then, Kunāla put up four fingers. Thereupon, King Aśoka became irritated.

“Aho, Rādhagupta,” he said to his minister, “who is it who is so ignorant of the ways of the world as to contend with me?”

Realizing that Aśoka was angry, Rādhagupta fell at his feet, and said: “Your majesty, who possibly would have enough power to vie with the chief of men? It is the virtuous Kunāla who is playfully rivalling his father.”

Aśoka then turned around to the right and saw Kunāla standing there. “Elder,” he then declared to Piṇḍola, “except for the state treasury, I now present to the noble community my kingship, my harem, my state officials, my self, and Kunāla. And I will bathe the great Bodhi tree with milk scented with sandalwood, saffron, and camphor [pouring it from] five thousand pitchers of gold, silver, crystal, and cat’s eye, filled with different kinds of perfumes. And in front of the Bodhi tree, I will offer a hundred thousand flowers to the noble
community. Proclaim in my name a great quinquennial festival!"
And he added:
My flourishing kingship
my harem, my officials, my self,
and my own virtuous Kunāla—
all of these (except for the treasury)
I offer to the sangha
that is a bowl of merit.

After making this present to the community of monks headed
by Pindola Bhāradvāja, the king himself mounted a platform
that he had had built on all four sides of the Bodhi tree, and
there he bathed the tree with four thousand pitchers [of milk].
As soon as the Bodhi bath was finished, the tree returned to
its previous condition.

As it is said:
As soon as the king had given the Bodhi tree
this most excellent bath,
tender, pale green sprouts appeared;
the tree was soon covered with green leaves,
delicate buds and shoots,
and the king and his court and the townspeople
greatly rejoiced at the sight.

After he had bathed the Bodhi tree, it was time for Aśoka
to start waiting on the community of monks.
"Great king," the elder Yaśas announced, "this great noble
community, which is worthy of the highest veneration, has
assembled; you may now wait upon it in the correct manner."
The king therefore began to serve the monks with his own
hand. [Starting with the senior monks] he went on until he
reached the novices' seats. There he saw two young novices

who were carrying on a friendly game of give-and-take. One
would give some ground meal to the other who, in turn, would
give some back. One would then offer cakes to his friend who
would offer them back. Then sweetmeats would be given by
one and returned by the other.
The king laughed. "These two novices are playing the games
of children," he observed and having now finished serving the
entire community, he returned to the elders' end.
There, Yaśas asked him: "Did your majesty see anything
at all that raised doubts in his mind about the community?"
"No," replied the king, "however, I did see two novices who
were playing children's games. Just as young boys play at
building houses in the dirt, so these two were playing at games
of ground meal and cakes."
"Say no more, great king," said the elder, "both of these
novices are arhats who are free from both physical and mental
defilements!"

Upon hearing this, Aśoka rejoiced in his heart and resolved
to present to these two novices his offering of cloth for the
community. The novices immediately divined the king's in-
tention and said: "Let us make his merits even more nu-
erious." One of them therefore set up a cauldron and the other
began to prepare dye.
"What is this you are undertaking?" the king asked them.
"Your majesty," they answered, "has approached us with
the desire of presenting an offering of cloth to the community
of monks; we will dye that cloth."
"I never said anything about this," Aśoka reflected, "but
only thought it. These two can read other people's minds!"
And immediately he felt full length at their feet, made an
ānjalī and said:

The Mauryan, who sacrificed
what it was good to sacrifice
in order to attain what it is good to attain,
today has such faith in you, good people,
that he resolutely makes this offering
along with his servants, his court,
and the citizens of his capital.

And he said to the two novices: “Before you, I would like
to present the three kinds of robes to the community of monks.”

Aśoka then brought the great quinquennial festival to a
close. After presenting the triple robe to all of the monks, he
made an offering of four hundred thousand pieces of gold to
the community and redeemed from it the earth, his harem,
his cabinet, himself, and Kunāla. His faith in the Teaching of
the Blessed One reached even greater heights.*

**THE BIRTH OF KUNĀLA**

On the very same day on which King Aśoka built the eighty-
four thousand dharmarājikās, his queen Padmavatī gave birth
to a son who was handsome, good-looking, and gracious, and
whose eyes were very bright.

“Rejoice, your majesty!” the king was told by those who
came to announce the birth, “a son has been born to you!”
Aśoka was overjoyed by this good news, and declared:

I am filled with supreme delight
for the greatness of the Mauryan line has been assured.
A son has been born to me.
I ruled through Dharma, may he increase Dharma!

And so the boy was given the name Dharmavivardhana
(“Dharma-increasing”).

When the prince was brought to Aśoka, he looked at him
and said with heartfelt joy:

My son’s eyes are beautiful and very auspicious;
they resemble a fully blossomed blue lotus.

* The text then adds: “He built the eighty-four thousand dharmarājikās.”
This is probably an interpolation for the sake of transition to the opening
line of the next episode.

**The Birth of Kunāla**

His face, adorned by them,
shines and glows like the full moon.

And he asked his ministers: “Have you ever seen anyone with
eyes such as these?”

“Your majesty,” his ministers replied, “we have never seen
a human being with such eyes, but there is a bird called the
kunāla that lives in the great Himālaya mountains; its eyes
are similar to these.”

And they added:

On King of Snows, the mountain peak,
where streams abound, new leaves sprout,
and flowers bud,
there dwells a bird called the kunāla,
and its eyes are like those of your son.

The king then ordered a kunāla bird to be brought to him.
His command was heard by the nāgas as far as one yojana
underground, and by the yakṣas as much as one yojana up in
the air; and the latter instantly fetched a kunāla for the king.
Aśoka examined the bird’s eyes thoroughly, and finding them
no different from those of his son, he declared: “The prince’s
eyes are like those of a kunāla, let him therefore be called
‘Kunāla!’ ”

As it is said:

Enamored with his eyes, the lord of the earth
then called his son “Kunāla.”

Thus throughout the world, that noble being,
the king’s son, was known by that name.

By and by, the prince grew up, and was married to a girl
named Kaṇcanamāla. One day, Aśoka went with Kunāla to
the Kukkutārāma Monastery. There the elder of the com-
community, Yaśas, an arhat endowed with the six supernatura-
faculties, realized that Kunāla’s eyes would soon be destroyed.
“And what deed,” the monks asked, “did Kunāla do that resulted in his being born in a prominent family, in his being good-looking, and in his perceiving the Truths?”

“Listen,” replied the elder. “Long ago, in days gone by, when men had lifespans of forty thousand years, there appeared in the world a wholly enlightened Buddha named Krakucchanda. When he had finished doing the work of a Buddha, he entered into the state of complete nirvāṇa without any remaining attributes. A king named Aśoka [sic] built a stūpa for him made out of four kinds of jewels.

“When this King Aśoka had passed away, a king without faith ascended the throne, and thieves carried off the stūpa’s jewels, leaving only the dirt and the wood. A group of people went there, and seeing the ruins, they were filled with sorrow.

“At that time, the son of a guild master happened by, and asked them why they were crying. ‘The stūpa of the wholly enlightened Krakucchanda,’ they replied, ‘was made of four kinds of gems; now it has been broken up.’

“The son of the guild master therefore restored the broken stūpa and set there a life-size image of the completely enlightened Krakucchanda. He then completed this resolute wish: ‘May I meet and gratify a master who is just like the Master Krakucchanda, and may I be worthy of him.’

“Do you understand, Venerable sirs? Kunāla was that son of a guild master. Because he rebuilt the stūpa of Krakucchanda, he, as a result of that act, was born into a prominent family. Because he rebuilt the image, he, as a result, became good-looking. And because he made an earnest vow, he met and was worthy of his master Śākyamuni who is just like the wholly enlightened Krakucchanda, and, as a result, he perceived the Truths.”

Aśoka’s Last Gift

One day, after King Aśoka had obtained faith in the Teaching of the Blessed One, he asked the monks who had made the greatest of all donations to the Buddhist religion. They informed him that it was the householder Anāthaśirvāna.

“How much did he give?” asked Aśoka.

“He gave,” the monks answered, “a gift of one hundred koṭiś of gold pieces to the Teaching of the Blessed One.”

Aśoka thought about this for a while and then declared: “In the past, this householder gave a total of one hundred koṭiś in support of the Buddha’s religion; I, therefore, will do likewise.”

At that point, Aśoka had already built the eighty-four thousand dharmarājikās, and had made a donation of one hundred thousand pieces of gold to each of them. Then, he had given one hundred thousand to the place of the Buddha’s birth, to the Bodhi tree, to the place where he set in motion the Wheel of Dharma, and to the site of his parinirvāṇa. Then he had held a great quinquennial festival and spent four hundred thousand on the entertainment of three hundred thousand monks, a third of whom were arhats, and two-thirds of whom were virtuous ordinary disciples. Also, he had offered to the ārya sangha the whole earth (except for the state treasury), as well as his harem, his state officials, his self, and his son Kunāla, and had redeemed them all with four hundred thousand pieces of gold. Thus, his total gift to the Teaching of the Blessed One amounted to ninety-six koṭiś.

Presently, however, Aśoka became ill, and thinking that he would soon pass away (and be unable to complete the balance of his gift), he became despondent. Aśoka’s prime minister, Rādhagupta, who had been with him in his previous life at the time of the gift of dirt, noted his depression; falling at his feet, he made an añjali and said:

Your majesty, why is your face—which your enemies dared not look at when it shone fiercely like the sun, which hundreds of lotus-lipped beauties eagerly kissed—now covered with tears?
“Rādhagupta,” answered the king, “I do not mourn the loss of wealth, the end of sovereignty, or the body that I am leaving, but I do lament the fact that I shall be separated from the āryas.” [And he added:]

I shall no more see the community endowed with every virtue, honored by men and gods; I shall no longer be able to honor it with the finest food and drink. These thoughts make me shed tears.

“Furthermore, Rādhagupta, it was my wish to give one hundred koṭis of gold pieces to the Teaching of the Blessed One, and I have failed to carry out this intention fully.”

Then declaring that he would nevertheless try to complete the gift of four more koṭis, he started sending gold coins to the Kukkuṭārāma.

At that time, Kunāla’s son, Sampadin, had become the heir-apparent. His counsellors said to him: “Prince, King Aśoka will not live much longer, but he keeps sending money to the Kukkuṭārāma. The power of kings lies in their state treasury; he should be restrained.”

Sampadin, therefore, issued an order prohibiting the treasurer [from disbursing state funds].

But the gold dishes for King Aśoka’s meals did not come under this interdiction, and after eating, Aśoka started sending them as offerings to the Kukkuṭārāma. The restriction was then extended to his gold dishes, and he was served his meals on silver plates. But these too he sent to the Kukkuṭārāma. The silver dishes were then restricted, and his food was served on [copper plates. But still he sent these to the Kukkuṭārāma. They were in turn restricted, and finally his food was served on]35 plates of clay.

Eventually, all Aśoka had left was a half of a myrobalan (āmalaka) fruit; he took it in his hand, summoned his ministers

and the citizens, and, very upset, he said: “Who is presently lord of the earth?”

The ministers got up from their seats, bowed down, made an anjali in King Aśoka’s direction, and declared: “Your majesty is lord of the earth!”

But Aśoka, his eyes clouded with tears, replied:

Do you lie in order to indulge me? I have lost my sovereignty. The only thing that remains under my rule is this half of a myrobalan. Woe! woe! to worthess lordship that is like the flood waters at the mouth of a river! For I too, the Indra of mortals, have fallen into frightful penury.

“Who now could deny the saying of the Blessed One that ‘All fortune is the cause of misfortune’? Truth-speaking Gautama asserted that, and indeed he was right! Today, I am no longer obeyed; no matter how many commands I think of issuing, they are all countermanded just like a river that is turned back when it dashes against a mountain cliff.” [Again he added:]

Once he ruled the earth under a single umbrella of sovereignty, destroyed the haughty enemy hosts, consoled the distressed and the poor. But he lost his support, fell from his position, and today this wretched king no longer rules in glory. Just like an aśoka tree when its flowers are cut off and its leaves have shrivelled and fallen, this king is drying up.
Then King Aśoka called a man to come to him, and said: “My friend, even though I have fallen from power, do this last task for me, out of respect for my past virtues. Take this my half a myrobalan, go to the Kukkuṭārāma, and offer it to the community. Prostrate yourself before the monks on my behalf and say this: ‘I give you the present greatness of the king who ruled all of Jambudvīpa.’ Then have this my last offering distributed in such a way that it is offered to and enjoyed by the whole community.”

And he said:

This today is my final offering;
my kingship and identity are gone.
Without good health, doctors, or medicinal herbs,
my only recourse is the assembly of noble ones.
Therefore accept and distribute among yourselves
this last gift that today I make to the sangha.

The man agreed to do as Aśoka asked. He took the half a myrobalan, went to the Kukkuṭārāma, and standing in front of the elders, he made an añjali and offered it to the sangha, saying:

He who previously ruled the earth
over which he had spread his umbrella of sovereignty
and warmed the world like the noonday sun at its zenith—
today that king has seen his good fortune cut off.
Deceived by his own karmic acts,
he finds his glory gone
like the setting sun at dusk.

Then the man, with his head bowed devoutly, paid his respects to the sangha and presented the offering of half a myrobalan, as a sign of the fickle nature of prosperity.
The elder of the sangha then spoke to the monks: “Brethren, today it is acceptable for you to show signs of emotion. Why? Because the Blessed One said that the misfortune of others

was an occasion for being upset. Whose heart would not be moved today, for:

A great donor, the lord of men,
the eminent Maurya Aśoka,
has gone from being lord of Jambudvīpa
to being lord of half a myrobalan.

Today this lord of the earth,
his sovereignty stolen by his servants
presents the gift of just half a myrobalan,
as though reproving the common folk
whose hearts are puffed up
with a passion for enjoying great splendor.”

Thereupon the myrobalan half was mashed, put in a soup
and distributed to the community.
Then Aśoka said to Rādhagupta: “Tell me, Rādhagupta, who is now lord of the earth?”
And Rādhagupta, falling at Aśoka’s feet, answered, making an añjali: “Your majesty is lord of the earth.”

Then King Aśoka struggled to his feet, gazed around at the points of the compass, and said, making an añjali in the direction of the sangha: “Except for the state treasury, I now present the whole earth, surrounded by the ocean, to the community of the Blessed One’s disciples.”

And he added:

I give to the sangha this earth,
with its Mandara mountain,
and its dark blue blouse, the ocean,
and its face adorned with many jewel mines.

May the community enjoy the fruit.

Furthermore:

With this gift, I do not seek the reward
of rebirth in Indra’s abode or Brahma’s world;
even less do I want the glory of kingship
that is as unsteady as a choppy sea.
But because I gave it with faith,
I would obtain as the fruit of this gift
something that cannot be stolen,
that is honored by the āryas
and safe from all agitation:
sovereignty over the mind.

Aśoka then had this inscribed on a document and sealed it
with his teeth; he had given the great earth to the sangha, and
he then passed away.

The ministers carried him off on a blue and yellow bier;
they paid their final respects to his body, cremated it, and got
ready to install the new king.

Rādhagupta, however, reminded them that King Aśoka had
given the whole earth to the sangha.

“What can we do?” asked the ministers.

“It was King Aśoka’s wish,” replied Rādhagupta, “to give
all told one hundred koṭis of gold pieces in support of the
Teaching of the Blessed One. He had given ninety-six koṭis
when his powers were restricted; but it was with the intention
of completing his gift that he gave the great earth away to the
sangha.”

The ministers therefore gave four koṭis of gold pieces for
the Teaching in order to buy back the Earth, and they con-
secrated Sampadin as king.

PUŠYAMITRA AND THE END OF THE MAURYAN LINE

Sampadin’s son was Bṛhaspati who, in turn, had a son
named Vṛṣasena, and Vṛṣasena had a son named Puśyadhar-
man, and Puśyadharman begot Puśyamitra.

One day, the latter asked his ministers: “What can I do to
make my name renowned forever?”

“In your majesty’s lineage,” they answered, “there was a

king named Aśoka who built eighty-four thousand dharmā-
rijākās. His fame will endure as long as the Buddhist religion
survives. Let your majesty also build eighty-four thousand
dharmārijākās, and so be famous like him.”

But the king said: “King Aśoka was great and distinguished;
is there not some other means?”

Now Puśyamitra had a Brahmin priest who was a mean
and faithless man. He declared: “Your majesty, there are two
ways to make a name endure forever. King Aśoka built eighty-
four thousand dharmārijākās and is thereby famous. If you,
the other hand, were to destroy those dharmārijākās, your
name would endure even longer.”

Then King Puśyamitra equipped a fourfold army, and in-
tending to destroy the Buddhist religion, he went to the Kuk-
kuṭārāma; but at the gate, he heard a lion’s roar, and fright-
ened, he retreated to Pāṭaliputra. A second time, and then
again a third time, the same thing happened. Finally, he sum-
momed the community and said to the monks: “I am going
to destroy the religion of the Blessed One—would you rather
keep the stūpas or the sanghārāma?” The monks decided to
keep the stūpas. Puśyamitra therefore destroyed the sanghā-
rāma, killed the monks there, and departed.

After some time, he arrived in Śākala, and proclaimed that
he would give a hundred dināra reward to whomever brought
him the head of a Buddhist monk. Now there was a certain
arhat there who lived in a dharmārijākā, and he started cre-
ating heads by means of his supernatural powers and giving
them to the king. When the king learned what was happen-
ing, he resolved to have the arhat put to death. The saint then
entered the trance of cessation but did not cross over to the
other side. The king [unable to kill him] finally gave up and
went to Kośṭhaka.

There the yakṣa Damśrāṇivāsin reasoned: “[If Puśya-
mitra is not killed] the Buddhist religion will die out; but I

56 The name means “He who dwells near the tooth [relic of the Buddha].”
maintain the precepts—it is not possible for me to harm anyone whomsoever!” Now another yakṣa, Kṛṣṇa, was seeking the hand of Daṃṣṭrāṇivāsin’s daughter in marriage, but Daṃṣṭrāṇivāsin had refused him saying “you are an evil-doer!” Now, however, he agreed to give Kṛṣṇa his daughter, on the condition that he take appropriate measures for the rescue and continued protection of the Buddhist religion.

Now King Puṣyamitra always had behind him as his bodyguard a very big yakṣa. He was so strong that the king was never beaten. But Daṃṣṭrāṇivāsin grabbed that yakṣa who was Puṣyamitra’s aide-de-corps, and went for a walk in the mountains. Puṣyamitra then fled south to the great ocean; but there the yakṣa Kṛṣṇa took up a great mountain and set it down on top of Puṣyamitra, his troops, and his chariots. He was then given the name Sunihita (“Well-put-down”). With the death of Puṣyamitra, the Mauryan lineage came to an end.

APPENDIX

Sanskrit Legends about Aśoka Not Appearing in the Aśokāvadāṇa

There are a number of stories about Aśoka no longer extant in the Sanskrit text of the Aśokāvadāṇa that have been preserved, however, in Chinese translation in various other sources. The following are summaries of some of these, based on a number of different works: the last chapter of the A-yu wang chuan translated by Fa-ch’īn c. 300 A.D., Aśvaghoṣa’s Sātrālamkara translated by Kumārajīva in 405 A.D. and the Chu tsha pi-yü ching translated in the 3rd century A.D., probably by K’ang Seng-hui.

(1) AŚOKA AND THE WISH-GRANTING JEWEL

Once, long ago, Aśoka was given five precious wish-granting gems by the King of Sri Lanka. He took them and gave one to the stūpa at the birthplace of the Buddha, another to the Bodhi tree, a third to the site of the Buddha’s first sermon, and a fourth to the site of the parinirvāṇa. He wanted to give the fifth jewel to one of his wives, but feared that if he did so it would cause jealousy among the others. Nevertheless, he decided to test his wives by declaring that he would give the jewel to the woman who was the best-dressed. All the women of the harem then competed with each other in putting on sumptuous clothes and ornaments, except for a young woman named Sujātā. She reasoned that the Buddha had declared that the eight precepts were the “best of dresses,” and so she observed the eight precepts while donning a simple white robe. When King Aśoka inspected all of his wives, he saw their

Glossary

The following list does not give all the possible meanings for each term, but only those immediately relevant to the text of the Ādokāvadāna and our discussion of it.

Ājñācakra (Pali, ānācakka). The wheel of state or of royal authority in the scheme of the Two Wheels of Buddhism.

Alakṣanakabuddha. A Buddha without the thirty-two marks of the Great Man (Mahāpuruṣa) on his body; an epithet of Upagupta.

Āmalaka. A myrobolan; a small, very astringent fruit thought to have medicinal properties.

Anātman (Pali, anatta). The Buddhist doctrine that there is no real permanent self within individuals.

Aṇjali. A salutation of respect and subservience consisting of cupping the hands and raising them in the direction of the respected person.

Apsāra. One of a class of heavenly female divinities thought to be very beautiful; sometimes translated as "nymph."

Arhat. A Buddhist saint, one who has attained enlightenment.

Ārya. Literally, a "noble one," and hence, in Buddhism, a respected member of the sangha, a monk.

Asura. One of a class of supernatural beings whose fate is constantly to wage war against the devas (gods). The asura gaṇi is one of the realms of rebirth.

Ātman. The self as absolute and real; the doctrine of ātman was opposed by the Buddhist notion of anātman (no-self).

Avadāna. Often translated as "legend"; a type of Buddhist story usually showing the workings of karma through the deeds of ordinary individuals.

Ayaścakravartin. An iron-wheeled cakravartin ruling over only one of the four continents of the cosmos; also a designation of Asoka.

Balacakravartin. An "armed cakravartin"; a king who needs to use or threaten force in order to establish his rule; an epithet of Asoka.

Bhakti. Loving devotion, adoration, generally felt for a divine figure.

Bhavacakra. The Wheel of Rebirth or Wheel of Life; a graphic depiction of the five (sometimes six) different realms of rebirth (gaṇi), often painted near the entrance to a monastery.

Bhikṣu (Pali, bhikkhu). Literally a "beggar"; a Buddhist monk.

Bodhicitta. The "mind of enlightenment" in all sentient beings
which, when awakened and developed, can bring about full enlightenment.

BODHISATTVA. Anyone who is on the way to becoming a Buddha and will successfully attain that goal. In Theravāda Buddhism this refers especially to the Buddha Gotama in his previous existences.

CAITYA. A monument or sanctuary that recalls or brings to mind the person of the Buddha or an event in his life.

CĀKRĀVARTIN (Pali, cakkavattī). A “wheel-turning” monarch; a great king who rules the world according to Dharma.

CĀTURDVĪPAKACĀKRĀVARTIN. A cakkavartin who rules over all four continents of the cosmos; equivalent to a survaṇnacakkavartin.

DĀNA. The practice of giving, of making donations, generally to the sangha; one of the principal ways of making merit.

DANDA. Literally, “the stick”; punishment inflicted by a king on his subjects in the maintenance of law and order.

DASĀBALA. The “Ten-powered One”; an epithet of the Buddha.

DEVARAJA. A divine king; the notion of a monarch embodying the figure of a deity.

DHARMA (Pali, Dhamma). The Teaching of the Buddha, Truth, Law, Righteousness, a basic element of reality (in the latter sense, usually written dharma). The word has many meanings, but they mostly revolve around the notion of anything that is fundamentally true or real.

DHARMACAKRA (Pali, dharmacakkha). The Wheel of the Teaching or of monastic concerns in the scheme of the Two Wheels of Buddhism.

DHARMACAKSU. The eye that sees the Truth (Dharma) and is opened when enlightenment is attained.

DHARMADAYA. Literally, “an heir to the Dharma”; a kinsman of the Buddha, a monk.

DHARMAKĀYA. The corpus of the Buddha’s Teachings, but closely identified with his person. In the context of the fully developed Mahāyāna doctrine of the bodies of the Buddha, the Dharma-kāya (generally capitalized) comes to be the Absolute or Truth-body of the Buddha.

DHARMARAJA. A righteous king who rules according to Dharma; also an epithet of the Buddha.

DHARMARAJIKĀ. A monument pertaining to a dharmarāja, a stūpa.

DHŪTĀNGA. A set of ascetic practices not normally expected of Buddhist monks but followed by some individual bhikkus who are so inclined.

DĪNĀ. A gold coin of a certain value, sometimes equated with the Roman denarius.

DROṇA. A measure of capacity, literally a “bucket.” The Buddha’s relics were first divided into eight portions of one droṇa each by a Brahmin whose name is also given as Droṇa and were then distributed to eight kings. The stūpas built to enshrine them were thus called droṇa stūpas.

DUKHKHA (Pali, dukkha). One of the basic doctrines of Buddhism, often translated as “suffering,” “ill,” or “unsatisfactoriness.” Dukkha characterizes all existence everywhere.

GANDHARVA. One of a class of heavenly male divinities, often in attendance on other gods, sometimes portrayed as celestial musicians.

GARUDA. One of a class of bird-like supernatural beings, traditionally held to be an enemy of the nāgas (snakes).

GAṬI. Literally, “a course,” “a way”; a realm of rebirth. There are classically five gaṭi into which a being can be reborn: the realms of the gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-beings. Later a sixth gaṭi, that of the asuras, was added to the scheme.

HĪNĀYĀNA. The “lesser vehicle”; one of the major schools of Buddhism, the other being the Māhāyāna or “greater vehicle.”

JAMBUDVIPA. The southern continent in the cosmological scheme of the four continents; usually identified with India.

JĀTAKA. A tale of one of the previous lives of the Buddha; the collection of such stories.

JĀTI. The position one obtains at birth as a result of one’s karma; one’s caste.

JINA. “The Victor”; an epithet of the Buddha.

JĪVA. In Jainism, the principle of life, the personal soul that eventually can attain liberation.

KALAHAJTA. “Victorious after a quarrel or confrontation”—an epithet of the copper-wheeled cakkavartin describing his conquest of the two continents he rules.

KĀMADHĀTU. The realm of desire presided over by Māra; the lowest of the realms in the three-fold world, the others being the rūpadhātu (realm of form), and the arūpadhātu (formless realm).

KARMA. Literally, “action” especially “moral action”; any deed which will bring about certain corresponding effects in this or a future lifetime; also, the law or principle governing these cause and effect relationships.

KĀTHINA. The cloth annually given by laypersons to Buddhist monks for them to dye and make into robes.
KĀYA. A “body”; an assemblage of various parts.
KOṬI. The largest of the numbers in the ancient Indian counting system, usually said to be ten million.
MAHĀPURAŚA. A “Great Man”; one who is endowed with the thirty-two bodily marks and who can be either a Buddha or a cakravartin.
MAHĀŚĀṅGHika. A Hinayānist sect whose teachings are seen as one of the precursors of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism.
MAHĀYĀNA. The “greater vehicle”; one of the major schools of Buddhism, the other being the Hinayāna (“lesser vehicle”).
MAITREYA. The next Buddha of this world cycle whose coming is expected in the more or less distant future.
MAṆḌACĀKṢU. “The eye of flesh”; the everyday physical eye of ordinary persons.
MANḌALA. Literally, a “circle”; a structured arrangement, usually of Buddhas or deities, in a cosmologically attuned pattern; a depiction of such a pattern.
MANḌALIN. A petty king ruling over a particular region but not over the whole of one of the continents.
NĀGA. A snake; a snake-like supernatural being often thought to live in or control water.
PAṆČAVĀRŚIK. A quinquennial festival held periodically by kings during which great donations are made to the sangha.
PARINIRVĀṆA. The final nirvāṇa occurring at the death of the Buddha or of any enlightened being, after which there is no more rebirth.
PINḌA. A food offering given, in Buddhism, to Buddhist monks, and, in Hinduism, to the deceased ancestors.
PRAKRITI. “Nature,” or “the created world,” as distinguished from Puruṣa (the soul or Spirit) in the Sāṁkhya philosophy.
PRAJNĀCAKṢU. The eye of wisdom which is opened upon enlightenment; equivalent to the dharma-cakṣu.
PRANIDHĀNA. A vow or resolve wish to attain some form of enlightenment, usually in a future life.
PRATYEKABODHI. The enlightenment attained by a pratyekabuddha.
PRATYEKABUDDHA (Pali, paṭekabuddha). One who, like the Buddha, attains enlightenment on his own, without the immediate help of a teacher, but who then, unlike the Buddha, does not share his enlightenment with others by teaching or founding a community.
PRATYUDĀṆA. The manner in which the silver-wheeled cakravartin is said to conquer the three continents that he rules—after some sort of “encounter.”

Preta. A hungry ghost whose chief suffering is that of hunger and thirst. The preta gaṭi is one of the realms of rebirth.
PUDGALA. Literally, a “person”; one of the principal tenets of the Personalist school of Buddhism (Pudgalavāda) that was criticized by more strict adherents to the anātman (no-self) doctrine.
PŪJA. An act of worship or reverence performed in front of a divinity or great saint or their image.
PUNYA-KSETRA. A “field of merit” such as the Buddha or the sangha toward whom acts of merit are thought to be most effective.
PURUṢA. Literally, the “Man.” In the Sāṁkhya philosophy, the soul or spirit in men and other beings that is caught up in prakṛti (the created world) until it attains salvation and release.
ṚṢI. A seer, a sage, an ascetic.
ṚPĀ. Form, materiality.
ṚPĀKĀYA. The body of form, the physical body of the Buddha.
ṚPYA-CAKRAVARTIN. A silver-wheeled cakravartin who rules over three of the four continents of the cosmos.
ŚAKYAPUTRA. A “son” or follower of Śakyamuni (the Buddha—the Sage of the Sākya clan); an epithet for a Buddhist monk.
ŚAṀKHya. A dualistically inclined school of Hindu philosophy, one of whose principal tenets is the doctrine of Puruṣa and prakṛti.
ŚAṀŚĀRA. The flow of rebirth, characterized by suffering, in which all beings are caught.
SANGHA. The Buddhist community; the order of monks and nuns.
SANGHARAJA. Literally, a “sangha-king”—the supreme patriarch of the monastic community appointed by the king in some Buddhist countries.
SĀRA. Literally, the “pith” or “core”; the essence of anything or person.
SĀRAVADHI. In the edicts of Aśoka, a term meaning the development and expansion of the essence (sāra).
SARVĀŚTIVĀDA. A Hinayānist sect predominant in Northwest India known for its doctrine that “everything exists” (sarva stiti) and for its willingness to incorporate avadānas and other legends into its canon.
SĀṢAṆAÇAKRA (Pali, sāṣanacakka). The wheel of the Buddhist order, equivalent to the dharma-cakra, in the scheme of the Two Wheels of Buddhism.
ŚASTRAJITTA. “Virtuous by the sword”; an epithet of the iron-wheeled cakravartin describing the way that he conquers the one continent he rules; also, a description of Aśoka.
SKANDHA (Pali, khaṇḍha). The five “aggregates” that constitute for
Buddhists what is usually thought of as an individual self. The
five skandhas are: form (rūpa), feeling (vedanā), perception
(samjñā), mental formations (saṃskāra), and consciousness
(vijñāna).
ŚRADDHĀ. Faith, trust, belief in the Buddha and his Teachings.
ŚRĀMAṆERA. A Buddhist novice who has not yet undergone the full
ordination of a monk (bhikṣu).
ŚROTĀPAṆANA. “Entering the stream”; the first realization of the Truth
of the Buddhist path, and hence the first step on the way to
enlightenment.
STŪPA. A mound-like monument containing relics of the Buddha or
some other object of veneration.
SŪTRA (Pali, sutta). Any doctrinal discourse attributed to the Buddha;
also one of the major divisions of the Buddhist canon.
SUVARṆACAKRAVARTIN. A golden-wheeled cakravartin who rules over
all four continents of the cosmos.
SVAYAMVĀNA. The way in which a golden-wheeled cakravartin con-
quers his four continents by his “own going forth.”
TĀMRAÇAKRAVARTIN. A copper-wheeled cakravartin who rules over
two of the four continents of the cosmos.
TATHĀGATA. An epithet of the Buddha often used by the Buddha in
referring to himself. It literally means the “one who has thus
come,” the “thus” implying that the Buddha has “come” in just
the same way as the Buddhas of the past “came.”
THERĀVĀDA. Literally, the “Way of the Elders”; a Hinayānist sect
important especially for its preservation of the Pali Canon and
its continued existence in South and Southeast Asia up to the
present.
TRAYASTRIMŚĀ HEAVEN. The “Heaven of the Thirty-three” gods, of
whom Indra is the chief; one of the most important heavens in
Hindu and Buddhist mythology. The Buddha is said to have
spent a rains retreat there preaching the Dharma to his mother
UPĀYA. “Expeditious means” in teaching the Dharma; good didactic
strategy.
ŪRNA. The whorl of hair located between the eyebrows of the Bud-
дра; one of the thirty-two signs of the Great Man (Mahāpuruṣa).
UṢṆĪṢA. The protuberance on top of the Buddha’s head; one of the
thirty-two signs of the Great Man (Mahāpuruṣa).
VĀJRA. Variously translated as “diamond,” “thunderbolt,” or “adam-
antine”; an embodiment in material terms of the hardness and
sharpness of enlightened wisdom.