

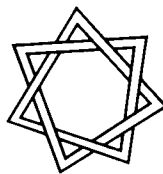
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A SANSKRIT MANUSCRIPT ON BIRCH-BARK FROM BAIRAM-ALI. II. AVADĀNA AND JĀTAKA (PART 4)

This section of the manuscript primarily contains tales about female Buddhists. We know of the formation of the Buddhist female community and women's monasteries since the end of the first centuries A. D., although Buddhist tradition links this fact with permission granted by the Buddha after many requests by Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī (the Buddha Śakyamuni's aunt, who raised him after his mother's death) and support from Ānanda. This tale has been preserved in the Pāli canon, in the *Manoratha Pūraṇī*, *Anguttara-nikaya*, I, 14, 5. The Pāli canon also contains a special section entitled *Therī Gāthā* [1], which praises those women who went along with the Buddha and gained fame as his followers. The biographies of these women were described in the European literature in 1893 by M. Bode [2]. Nonetheless, the important question of what later befell these women remains unanswered in the Pāli canon, as it does in the entire Theravāda school, which bring their heroines only to the state of *arhat*. Only the Mahāyāna gave a detailed answer to the question.

Since the Bairam-Ali manuscript appears to present the story of Buddhism's first female adherents with the addition of several new details that reflect the influence of the Mahāyāna, we cite two passages from the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* in which the Buddha foretells their eternal fate: *atha khalu mahāprajāpatī bhikṣuṇī bhagavato mātṛśvasā śaḍbhir bhikṣuṇīsahasraibhi śaikṣāśaikṣabhikṣur bhikṣuṇībhi sārddham utthāy' āsanād yena bhagavāms tenāṃjalim praṇāmayitvā bhagavatau 'bhimukhā bhagavato 'dimātram*

mukham avalokayaṃtyaḥ sthitā abhūt [3] ("At that time the Buddha's maternal aunt, the nun Mahāprajāpatī, and the six thousand nuns who accompanied her, some still learning, others with nothing more to learn, rose from their seats, pressed their palms together with a single mind and gazed up at the face of the Honoured One, their eyes never leaving for an instant") [4]. The Buddha understood the unspoken question and answered it, dedicating a prophecy to this group of his adherents: *api tu gotamī idas tvam cyutā samānā anupūrveṇa saporivārā istribhāvaṃ vivartayitvā aṣṭārimśānām buddhakotinayutaśatasahasrānām sāntike bodhisatva dharmabhānako bhaviṣyasi imāny api te śaḍbhikṣuṇīsahasrāṇi śaikṣāśaikṣāni bhikṣuṇīnām tvayaiva sārddham teṣāṃ buddhānām bhagavatām sāntike dharmā bhāṇakā bhaviṣyanti* ("Now if you would like to know the prophecy for you, I will say that in ages to come, amid the Law of sixty-eight thousands of millions of Buddhas, you will be a great teacher of the Law, and the six thousand nuns, some still learning, some already sufficiently learned, will accompany you as teachers of the Law") [5]. After this, the Buddha made the same prophecy in relation to the Buddha's wife and the mother of his son, as well as the nuns who accompanied her. Thus, the fate of these women in the future led not only to the status of *bodhisattvas*, but also teachers who spread the *dharmā*.

In the Bairam-Ali manuscript, the tale of the first of these women begins on fol. 14b(4) [6]. The daughter of the head of the merchants leaves her parents' house.

FOL. [14a]

TRANSLITERATION

1. X X X X tay[ā] a[r]hatvaṃ pr[ā]ptam pūrvva[m] kāśyape pravrajitā āsi vacaya as[am]yatāy[ā].
2. *pūrṇaka iti pūrṇako*¹ nāmena śreṣṭhiputro āyusmato 'nurudhasya sārddhaviharī sagilo²
3. *nībhū[to]*³ antaraghare 'rhatvaṃ prāptam tatraiva parinirvṛtaḥ pūrvayoga mānayatī
4. *kanakamune viharah kārītaḥ kāśyap[e] pravrajitaḥ || kubjā iti sthūlanandāya svāddhya*⁴
5. *yaṃ kariṣyati śaḍvarga kānam*⁵ khādanāya⁶ dattam yāva punareva uggatā⁷ pūrvvayogaṃ rāja

¹ A slip of the pen, instead of *pūrṇako*.

² Prakritism or a slip of the pen, instead of *sakhilo*.

³ Instead of *nībhūto*.

⁴ Instead of *svāddhyā*.

⁵ Instead of *śaḍvarga khānam*.

⁶ Instead of *khādanīyam*.

⁷ Prakritism, instead of *udgatā*.

TRANSLATION

1. [and] a [state of] *arhat* was gained by her. “In an earlier rebirth, in the time of [the buddha] Kāśyapa, I received [my] *pravrajyā* ordination, [but] because of careless talks [I was born as a dog”, she explained].

2. [Tale] of **Pūrṇaka**^[1]. The head of the merchants had a son called Pūrṇaka. [He] lived as a pupil with the noble Anuruddha.

3. In an earlier [rebirth] he was his friend. [Thanks to Anuruddha] he gained [a state of] *arhat* directly in the inner chambers [of the house] and immediately achieved *nirvāna*. [His *karma*]: in a previous rebirth he venerated [the buddhas].

4. He organized the construction of a vihara for [the buddha] Kanakamuni^[2]. He received *pravrajyā* [ordination] during the time of the buddha Kāśyapa. [Tale] of **Kubjā**^[3]. With Sthūlanandā^[4] she will good training

5. receive. [In a previous rebirth] she offered [as a gift to the community] six types of food suitable for consumption. For this reason she was reborn in [the world]. In a previous rebirth

Commentary

^[1] Pūrṇaka, or Pūrṇa — main character in two *avadānas*: *Pūrṇabhāṅga* (first *avadāna* in the *Avadānaśataka*) and *Pūrṇa* (second *avadāna* in the *Divyāvadāna*). The manuscript gives only some details of his biography. He is also mentioned in the Tibetan translation of *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, section *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, 41/112, 4, 8 (see Jampa Losang Panglung, *Die Erzählstoffe des Mūlasarvāstivādinaya Analysiert auf Grund der Tibetischen Übersetzung*, Tokyo, 1981, pp. 18—9), Pūrṇa, together with Anuruddha, is also mentioned in *jātaka* 19 from the *Jātakamālā* (“*Jātaka* of Lotus Stems”), where it is told that they took to the forest as hermits after the death of Anuruddha's father.

^[2] Kanakamuni — one of the first buddhas, next but one before Śākyamuni: Kāśyapa, Śākyamuni, Kanakamuni, Krakucchanda. See *BHSD*, p. 167.

^[3] Kubjā (lit. “hunchbacked”) usually referred to in the Buddhist literature as Kubjottara (Pāli Khujjatarā). The Pāli canon several times mentions *upāsikā* Khujjatarā, see *Samyuttanikaya*, II, XVII, 24; *Apadana*, II, 429 ff. In the Pāli and Sanskrit literature, the story of this servant-girl is evidently scattered over several works. For example, in the *Jātakamālā*, *jātaka* 19, it is told that a *bodhisattva* together with his brothers, sisters and the servant-girl Kubjā, after the death of the *bodhisattva*'s father took to the forest as a hermit. It was not possible to identify *gāthā*, which closes the tale in the manuscript, in a single tale about Kubjā. One should also note that in this manuscript the tale of Kubjā is repeated in abbreviated form on fol. 62b (2), where it is called Kujjā (Prakritized form); only a single *gāthā*, however, is repeated there.

^[4] As concerns Kubjā, another important reference to her name as the pupil of the nun Sthūlanandā occurs in the *Mahāvastu*, vol. III, 49.10 ff. We find there the tale of how this nun spoke out against Kāśyapa in defense of Ānanda after the latter was expelled by Kāśyapa from the community and accused of failing to hinder the Buddha Śākyamuni's exit to *mahāparinirvāna*.

FOL.14b

TRANSLITERATION

1. bh[ā]ryā ku[b]jj[ā] bhūtā dārutakṣakehi⁸ visvādītā⁹ vyaṃ rjuṃ kariṣyāma iti. yāva rājā gāthā
2. bhāṣati rathakārasahasrehi ratham gānām śatehi ca na śakyaṃ rjukā kartuṃ tathā hi unna
3. tonnaO¹⁰ tā || ceti iti rājño cetisya¹¹ vistareṇa yathā vinaye saptatāla
4. matram niṣiditva arthan na cchidyati¹² iti || dhvaja iti brahmadattasya duhitā sā janapa-
5. dakālyāṇā sā aṣṭahi rājānehi yācīyati¹³ yāva svayaṃvara¹⁴ avatīrṇa
6. tāya¹⁵ buddham bhagavantam

TRANSLATION

1. Kubjā was the wife of a *rājā*. The wood-cutters [gave her a marvellous gift] [, a carriage]. [They decided]: “We will make it well!” How the *rājā* a *gāthā*

2. did pronounce: “Thousands of carriage-makers and hundreds of chariot talliers cannot make as solid [a carriage] as [this one],

⁸ Prakritism, instead of *dārutakṣakebhiḥ*. The form =*ehi* generally occurs instead of =*ebhiḥ*; it is attested in *BHSG*.

⁹ The form *visvādītā* is not attested in Sanskrit. Perhaps a slip of the pen instead of *vismāyītā*?

¹⁰ Hereafter the sign O is used to denote string holes.

¹¹ The forms *ceti* and *cedi* are attested only in the Buddhist Sanskrit, instead of *caitya*; see *BHSD*, pp. 232—3.

¹² Instead of *chidyate*.

¹³ Instead of *yācyate*.

¹⁴ Instead of *svayaṃvara*.

¹⁵ Instead of *tayā*.

3. the best of the best^[5]. [Tale] of the *caitya*. The *caitya* for the ruler is [described] in detail in the *Vinaya* as follows: “If [the height] for sitting [is] only seven *tālas*,
4. it will be of no use”^[6] [Tale] of the **sign [of the *dharma*]**^[7]. The [*rājā*] Brahmadatta had a daughter. She [was reputed to be] the greatest
5. beauty in the land. Eight *rājās* wished [to have her for a wife]. When the *svayaṃvara* approached,
6. she [decided]: “to the Buddha Bhagavan

Commentary

^[5] The *gāthā* on fol. 62b(2—4) displays several deviations from the one cited above: *rathakārasahasreṇa rathakāraśatena ca na śakyam rjukā kartum tatheyam unnatonnatī*. In meaning, this phrasing seems better, as “chariot talliers” have nothing to do with the making of chariots.

^[6] “Seven *tālas*” (lit. “seven palms”) — *tāla* is a measure of height used in describing *caityas* for buddhas and highly esteemed persons. See, for example, the *Saddharmapundārika-sūtra*, Bibliotheca Buddhica, X, pp. 451.7, 459.11, 465.7, etc.

^[7] The name of the daughter of the ruler Brahmadatta is not given in the tale. We find only an indication that she is *janapadakālyāṇā*. “This gives grounds for comparing the tale with the tale of Therī Nandā. The story goes as follows. Therī Nandā was greatly renowned among those who practiced meditation. In her final incarnation, she was supposed to be reborn as a pupil of Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī. Upon hearing that the Buddha could prove that beauty means nothing, Nandā went to him. The Buddha used his miraculous power to create a woman of unusual beauty who served him with a fan. Nandā was shamed, but the lesson had only begun. Before her eyes the woman began to grow old, ugly, lose strength, and finally she fell to the ground dead. Nandā realized that beauty is fleeting. This is how she gained faith in the teaching of the Buddha and became a pupil of Mahāprajāpatī. The story preserved in the manuscript contains only some episodes from Nandā’s life. However, the majority of tales about beautiful women who reject secular life and choose the path of the Teaching are constructed in similar fashion (for detail, see M. Bode, pp. 763—6; cf. also *jātaka* No. 384, *Dhammaddhvaja*). A similar plot was reflected in the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* in the Tibetan translation 41/210.4.3 (see Jampa Losang Panglung, *op. cit.*, p. 208).

FOL. [15a]

TRANSLITERATION

1. *śāstāraṃ taṃ carayāmi yāva pravrajitā sarvvaś ca maṇḍal[a]l[e] prajñāpt[ā]*
2. *yāva acchādo dinnāḥ arhatvaṃ prāptaṃ karme pūrvvam upāsikā kanakamuner viharah*
3. *O kāritaḥ bhratṛṇāṃ caika [kā]rṣapaṇam¹⁶ dattaṃ yāva saṃsāre śodhitaḥ rājabhū-*
4. *te hi kāśyape brahmacaryaṃ cīrṇṇam || kṣemā rājño prasenaji[ta]sya¹⁷ duhitā jātā sā rājño*
5. *putrasya dinnā tāya gr̥hasṭha bhūtāya aṣṭa vimokā¹⁸ sāksī kṛtā arhatvaṃ prāptaṃ sā*

TRANSLATION

1. to that Teacher, I insist on leaving”. How [she then] received *pravrajyā* ordination and became known to all in the neighbourhood.
2. How she was served food [of the greatest purity] and [how she] attained [the state of] *arhat*. [According to the *karma*] in a previous rebirth she was an *upāsikā*. *Vihara* [of the buddha] Kanakamuni
3. was built with her help, and they gave out [there] a *karṣapaṇi* to each of the brothers. How [thanks to this] [she] achieved purity in the *sansara*.
4. Kāśyapa was a *rājā*, [she] led a virtuous life. [Tale] of **Kṣemā**^[8]. A daughter was born to the *rājā* Prasenajit. She
5. was given in marriage to the *rājā*’s son. [But] while she [was still] living in the family she achieved “eight liberations”^[9] and attained [the state of] *arhat*. She

Commentary

^[8] Kṣemā — heroine of many *jātakas* and *avadānas* of the *Kṣemeti* (see *Avadānaśataka*, I, pp. 45—51). The dispute between the *bhikṣuni* Kṣemā and Prasenajit forms the content for the chapter *Khemātherī* (see *Samyuttanikaya*, pt. IV, pp. 374—80). A Pāli version of the tale of Kṣemā has been translated into English by M. Bode, pp. 527—32. The manuscript contains only some information about Kṣemā. We find the standard formulas, which render the story similar to all other tales about female Buddhists.

^[9] “Eight liberations” are enumerated in the *Mahāvīyūtpatti*, Nos. 1510—1518.

¹⁶ The *akṣara kā* is erroneously omitted here.

¹⁷ The *akṣara =ta* is erroneously omitted here.

¹⁸ Instead of *vimokṣā*.

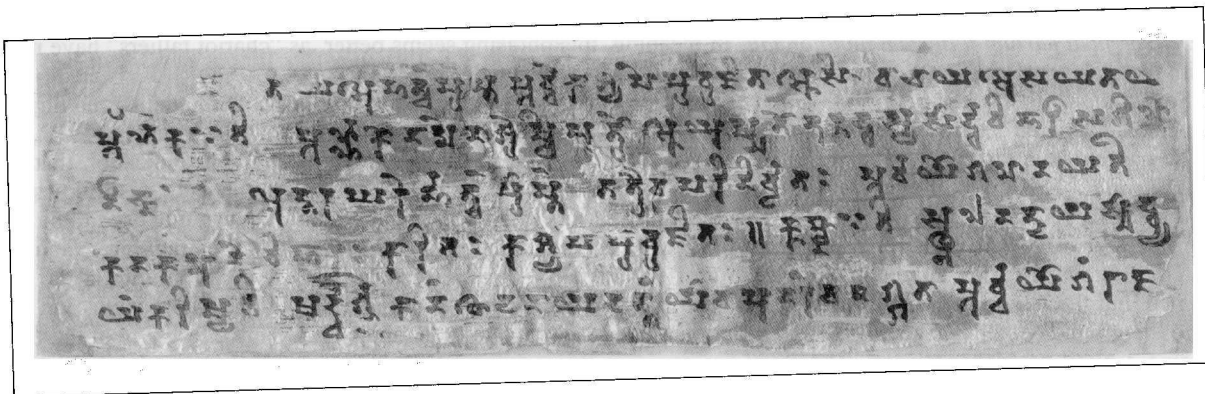


Fig. 1

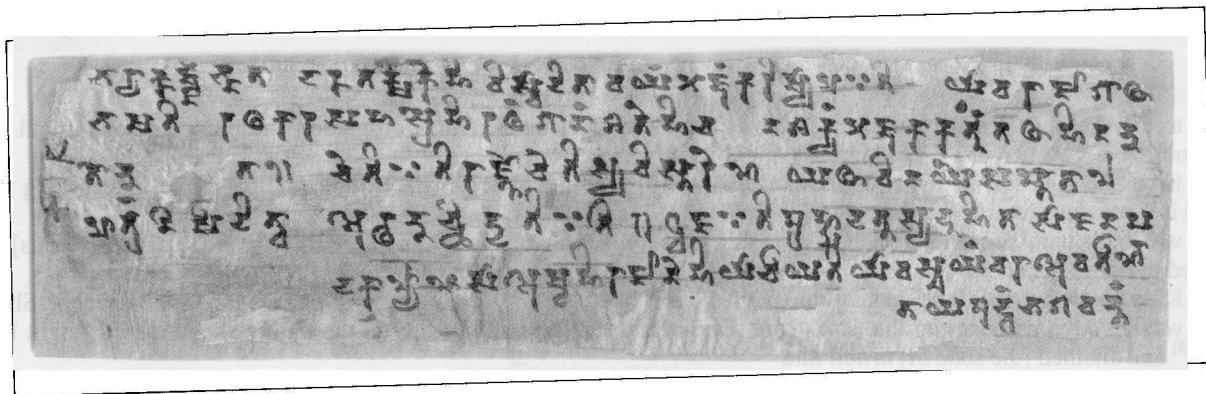


Fig. 2

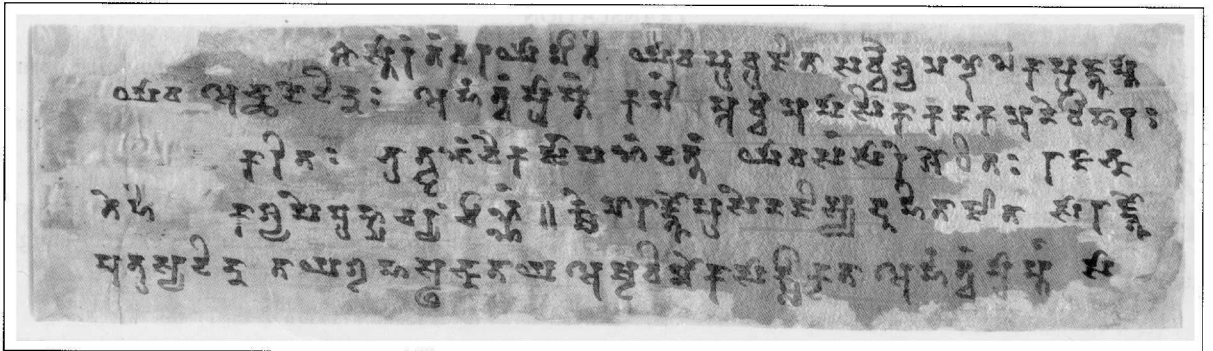


Fig. 3

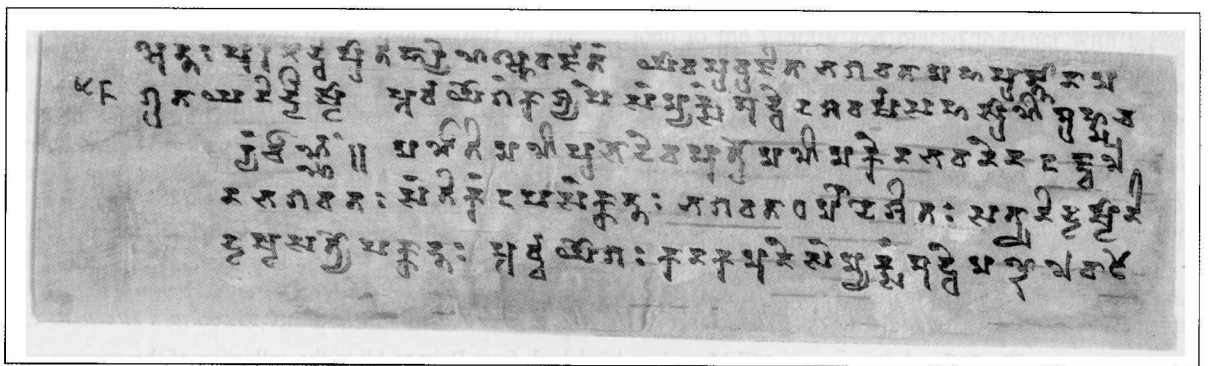


Fig. 4

FOL. 15b

TRANSLITERATION

1. *antaḥpura ṛddhiprātiharyeṇa āvarj[i]taṃ yāva pravrajitā bhagavatā mahaprajñā nāma*
2. *gra¹⁹ tāya nirddiṣṭa pūrvayogaṃ kāśyape sammyaksambuddhe daśa varṣa sahasrāṇi brahmāca-*
3. *O ryaṃ cīrṇaṃ || mañīti maṇiprabho devaputro maṇimakena²⁰ bhavena uvale*
4. *na bhagavataḥ saṃtikaṃ upasaṃkkrāntaḥ bhagavatā dharmodeśitaḥ satyāni drṣṭāni*
5. *drṣṭasatyopakkrāntaḥ pūrvayogaḥ kanakamune sammyaksambuddhe maṇḍalavāto*

TRANSLATION

1. was converted in the inner chambers thanks to [her] supernatural abilities. How she received *pravrajyā* ordination. The Bhagavan went on by the name of “Most wise”^[10]
2. to call her. In a previous rebirth, in the time of the entirely enlightened Kāśyapa, she for ten thousand years led a virtuous way
3. of life. [Tale] of **Maṇi**^[11]. Son of the gods Maṇiprabha, [together] with a brilliant palace of precious stones,
4. came to the Bhagavan. The Bhagavan was trained in following the *dharmā*. [The four] noble truths
5. he had mastered and achieved correct [conduct]. In a previous rebirth during the time of the entirely enlightened Kanakamuni

C o m m e n t a r y

^[10] Mahāprajñā — lit. “that wisdom in which she is great”.

^[11] Maṇi here is a proper name; his full name is Maṇiprabha devaputra. In the *uddāna* on fol. 13b(1) another name is used — Maṇa. The name Maṇiprabha is not attested in the Buddhist literature. The plot of the tale is indicated only in broad strokes. It possibly refers to the tale of the *yakṣa* Maṇibhadra (Pāli *yakkha* Maṇibhadra), who lived in the *caitya* of Maṇimālaka (see *Samyuttanikaya*, I, 208).

N o t e s

1. See Paramatthadīpanī, *Dhammapāla's Commentary on the Therīgāthā*, ed. E. Müller. (London, 1893). — Pali Text Society, 20.

2. M. Bode, “Women leaders of the Buddhist reformation”, *JRAS* (1893), pp. 517—66; 763—98. The author used material from two manuscripts that have remained unpublished up through the present: a manuscript in the Siñhalese writing collated with a Burmese manuscript of Nipata, 1—3; another Siñhalese manuscript. The article gives the Pāli text and an English translation of the biographies of the following female Buddhists: Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, Khemā, Uppalavaṇṇā, Paṭācārā, Dhammadinnā, Nandā, Soṇā, Sakulā, Bhaddā (Kuṇḍalakesā), Bhaddā Kāpilāni, Bhaddā Kaccānā, Kisāgotamī, Sigālakamātā.

3. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra. Central Asian Manuscripts. Romanized Text*, ed. by Hirofumi Toda (Tokushima, 1983), p. 131.

4. *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. by Burton Watson (New York, 1993), p. 191.

5. *Ibid.*

6. See *Manuscripta Orientalia*, VII/2, pp. 10—9.

I l l u s t r a t i o n s

Fig. 1. Sanskrit manuscript SI Merv 1 on birch-bark from Bairam-Ali in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. [14a], 19.0×5.0 cm.

Fig. 2. The same manuscript, fol. 14b, 19.0×5.0 cm.

Fig. 3. The same manuscript, fol. [15a], 19.0×5.0 cm.

Fig. 4. The same manuscript, fol. 15b, 19.0×5.0 cm.

¹⁹ Instead of *nāmāgra*.

²⁰ Instead of *maṇimayena*.