

STEPHAN HILLYER LEVITT

A SINHALESE TEXT ON PROPER BEHAVIOR
FOR A GOOD BUDDHIST

There is in the Indic and Greater Indic manuscript collection of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, now housed in the Special Collections area of the Library of the University of Pennsylvania, a palm leaf manuscript that contains 13 texts in Pāli or Sinhalese, or Pāli and Sinhalese mixed. The manuscript's shelf number is M27 (accession number 55-15-1)¹. The tenth section of this manuscript (section J) is an unidentified text in Sinhalese on *sīla*, or 'good behavior' for a Buddhist. The text lacks any colophon. It is an outline of this text done by myself and Dr. Amaradasa Virasinha at the time of cataloguing this text that is presented here².

The eleventh text in this manuscript (section K) is the *Detiskarma padārthaya*. This latter proves to be the *Pubbakammapiḷoti* of the *Apadāna* of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, plus a few extra verses in Pāli, a word-for-word translation into Sinhalese, a Sinhalese retelling of the verses, and several additional stories in Sinhalese. The text treats the Buddha's misdeeds in his former human lives and their consequences in his life after he had attained enlightenment. The text emphasizes that every deed has a consequence, even

¹ STEPHAN HILLYER LEVITT, "A Descriptive Catalogue of the Indic and Greater Indic Manuscripts in the Collection of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania", in *The Library Chronicle* 44.2 (Winter 1980), pp. 97-152 + 10 plates. See pp. 131-135.

² I would like to thank Dr. Amaradasa Virasinha, formerly of the Library of the University of Pennsylvania, for his help with preparing the outline of the text presented in this paper. I would also like to thank the Ven. Kurunegoda Piyatissa Nayaka Maha Thero, Abbot and Incumbent of The New York Buddhist Vihara, and Rev. Aregama Sirisumana of The New York Buddhist Vihara for their help with various of the points in the paper.

for the Buddha. A retelling and full discussion of this text and its tradition has been published recently³.

The twelfth text in this manuscript (section L), the *Upāsakamanussavinaya varṇṇanā*, was discussed recently by Dr. Kate Crosby⁴. This text focuses in the main on the various sins done by people, in general, and their saṃsāric repercussions leading to re-becoming in various hells, followed by re-becoming as a *peta*, a *yakkha*, a poor man, a type of animal, and so forth. One section, as well, treats the sins of monks and the resulting hells. While the text clearly focuses on demeritorious acts and their karmic consequences, it concludes by mentioning types of good behavior and their results for the individual layman.

Crosby did not refer to the text focused on in this paper in her article, as she was using a preliminary typescript of the University Museum catalogue that I had passed on to The Institute for Advanced Study of World Religions and which they apparently had put on microfiche – which they should not have done. When I was going over this manuscript again with Dr. Virasinha at a later date, it was discovered that what had been construed as the beginning of the *Detiskarma padārthaya*, was in fact a separate section entirely in Sinhalese and without a colophon. So this was numbered as section J, the *Detiskarma padārthaya* was renumbered as section K, and the *Upāsakamanussavinaya varṇṇanā* was renumbered as section L. (Crosby, in her article, refers to the latter by its earlier numbering, as section K.)

In her article, Crosby notes that she had prepared a draft critical edition and translation of the *Upāsakamanussavinaya*⁵. At the time her article appeared, I sent her a copy of the University Museum catalogue as it was published (see n. 1 above), a folio-by-folio and line-by-line outline of the *Upāsakamanussavinaya varṇṇanā* as in the University of Pennsylvania Museum manuscript that I had done with Dr. Virasinha at the time of

³ STEPHAN HILLYER LEVITT, *Explanations of Misfortune in the Buddha's Life: The Buddha's Misdeeds in His Former Human Lives and Their Remnants*, Parkside Hills, New York, 2010 (printed for free distribution by The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.).

⁴ KATE CROSBY, "A Theravāda Code of Conduct for Good Buddhists: The *Upāsakamanussavinaya*", in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 126.2 (April-June 2006), pp. 177-187.

⁵ KATE CROSBY, "A Theravāda Code of Conduct for Good Buddhists", p. 182, n. 21.

the initial cataloguing (from her comments, it would seem that Crosby had not yet consulted this manuscript), the outline of the text we are focusing on here, and some information that I thought would be useful to her. She never acknowledged this material or my note, though. After waiting a reasonable period of time for her edition to come out, and realizing that editions sometimes take decades to appear, I have decided to present the material regarding this text at this time.

Crosby noted of the University of Pennsylvania Museum manuscript of the *Upāsakamanussavinaya*, I might mention in passing, that though it was listed in the catalogue as being in Pāli and Sinhalese, there was no Sinhalese in the text cited in the catalogue. The catalogue, though, gave only very brief text for each entry. Further, the full title of the text in the University of Pennsylvania Museum manuscript is *Upāsakamanussavinaya varṇṇanā*, with Sinhalese *varṇṇanā* for Pāli *vaṇṇanā*. While Crosby refers to a manuscript with the title *Upāsakamanussavinayavaṇṇanā*, she does not give this as the title of the University of Pennsylvania Museum manuscript, noting this instead to be *Upāsakamanussavinaya*. I can only conclude that the text of this manuscript contained similar Sinhalese reflexes of Pāli terms, and that this is why Dr. Virasinha told me it was in Pāli and Sinhalese. And, indeed, in my notes I do have that Sinhalese *yak* appears in this manuscript for Pāli *yakkha* at one point.

An outline of the unidentified Sinhalese text on proper behavior for a good Buddhist follows:

I. Invocation (f. *caḥ* recto, line 6).

II. Definition of good behavior (*sīla*) as the fourfold items of good behavior (*sīla*-s) (f. *caḥ* verso, line 1).

[The fourfold *sīla*-s are *pratimokṣasaṃvara* (Pāli *pātimokkhasaṃvara*) ‘restraint that is binding on a Buddhist monk’, *indriyasaṃvara* ‘restraint or subjugation of the senses’, *ājīvapārisuddhi* ‘purity or propriety of livelihood’, and *pratyāyasanniśrita* (Pāli *paccayasannissita*) ‘(restraints) associated with the (four) necessities of daily life for a monk’.]

III. Explanation of *pratimokṣasaṃvarasīla* as what is to be observed (customary behavior of Buddhist monks) and what is to

be avoided (f. *caḥ* verso, line 1 - line 2).

[There were 227 precepts that were promulgated by the Buddha to be observed by ordained monks during the Buddha's life. These are still practiced today.]

III-A. Customary behavior defined as (ff. *caḥ* verso, line 2 - *cha* recto, line 2):

1. [Not clear.]
2. If one sees trash, one ought to clean up the place.
3. If one sees an old, sick, or virtuous person, one ought to serve him.
4. One should worship teachers three times a day.
5. One should worship *stūpa*-s (or, relic shrines) and *bodhi* trees three times a day.
6. One must take one's own share of what is cooked after one serves those who are entitled to it.
7. One must practice discourses with which one is familiar without lassitude.
8. One should practice discourses one learns from others according to their instructions.
9. One should be properly attired.
10. [Treats the use of water.]
11. [Not clear.]
12. One ought to do the work directed.

And so forth.

III-B. Definition of what is to be avoided as the ten *akusalakarma*-s (Pāli *akusalakamma*-s) 'bad deeds'. Directive to do the tenfold *kusalakarma*-s (Pāli *kusalakamma*-s) 'good, or meritorious deeds' (f. *cha* recto, line 2 - line 3).

[The *akusalakarma*-s are based on greed, hatred, and delusion, the three types of unwholesome thoughts (*akusalacittā*-s). The ten *akusalakarma*-s are 1) killing, 2) stealing, 3) committing adultery, 4) lying, 5) intoxicating the mind, 6) eating at improper times, 7) dancing, singing, and playing music, 8) wearing garlands and using unguents, perfumes, and makeup, 9) using luxurious chairs and beds, and 10) accepting jewelry and wearing jewelry so as to show off one's wealth. The ten *kusalakarma*-s are the opposites of the ten *akusalakarma*-s, and are also known as the ten *śikṣāpada*-s (Pāli *sikkhāpada*-s) 'rules of morality, or

precepts'. The first five are also the first five of the usual listing of ten *sīla*-s. The lay Buddhist community ordinarily is supposed to observe the first five at all times, but on new, full, and half-moon days, all ten *kusalakarma*-s.]

IV. Explanation of *indriyasamvarasīla* (f. *cha* recto, line 3 - *cha* verso, line 1).

[This is enjoined on monks, and on new, full, and half-moon days, on lay people as well. It is polite behavior, though, for lay people to always practice it, such as, for instance, mindfulness.]

V. Explanation of *ājīvapārisuddhisīla* (f. *cha* verso, line 1 - line 3).

[This is enjoined on both monks and lay people.]

VI. Explanation of *pratyāyasanniśritasīla* (f. *cha* verso, line 3 - line 6).

[This is enjoined on both monks and lay people.]

VII. Study the fourfold *sīla*-s in the layman's life as well as in the priest's life (f. *cha* verso, line 6).

Crosby commented in her summation that “[s]ometimes we can gain an idea of a text’s usage from the other texts bound in the same manuscript”. She continued:

“In this case, while several of the manuscripts are single-text manuscripts, the University of Pennsylvania manuscript... also contains a number of *vandanā* praise texts (of the Bo tree and relics), ritual texts, and a text for the *mettābhāvanā* meditation, the usual meditation taught to laity in Sri Lanka before the twentieth-century revival of meditation.... [T]he Thai manuscript catalogued under this title [*Manussavinaya*] in the British Library does not contain the text, but a diffuse sermon inspired by having studied the text. This indicates that the study of the *Upāsakamanussavinaya* served as the basis for sermons.”⁶

Significantly, in this context, the second and third texts in the University of Pennsylvania Museum manuscript are the *Ālavaka Sutta* and a Sinhalese commentary on the *Ālavaka Sutta* (sections B and C, following a ritual text treating the fivefold prostration, or veneration with forehead, waist, elbows, knees, and feet). The *Ālavaka Sutta* records eight questions asked of the Buddha by

⁶ KATE CROSBY, “A Theravāda Code of Conduct for Good Buddhists”, p. 186.

Ālavaka Yakkha and the answers given by the Buddha. When the Buddha answered all the questions to Ālavaka's satisfaction, Ālavaka became a follower of the Buddha. The conversion of Ālavaka is considered to be one of the chief incidents of the Buddha's life. This text is very popular among Sinhalese Buddhist monks who preach.

This is followed by a Sinhalese exposition of the sense of a *Patthanā Gāthā* followed by the *Patthanā Gāthā* itself (sections D and E). There are various *Patthanā Gāthā*-s, or verses expressing wishes, in Theravāda Buddhism. The *Patthanā Gāthā* here seems to refer to the Buddha's aspiration for attaining enlightenment⁷. Then comes the popular *Narasīha Gāthā* (section F), which is eight verses of praise reputed to have been uttered by Yasodharā, the Buddha's wife, on first seeing the Buddha after his enlightenment, and being struck by the glory of his personality. Then come the texts praising veneration of the Bo tree (section G) and relics (section H), and the *mettābhāvanā* meditation text (section I). The entire collection closes with an unidentified Sinhalese text also on meditation (section M).

The text focused on in this paper, together with the *Detiskarma padārthaya* and the *Upāsakamanussavinaya varṇṇanā*, provide us with three texts placed in sequence and by context clearly intended for popular consumption that treat *karma* 'moral cause and effect across lives; deeds as having results', with the goal of encouraging good behavior. Of note is that there is a logical sequence between these three texts as, indeed, between all the texts in this manuscript. Here, the first treats good behavior and admonishes against bad behavior. The second emphasizes that even the Buddha did *akusalakarma*-s 'bad deeds' in his previous human lives. The third focuses on the various *akusala-karma*-s done by people, in general, with specific sins mentioned for monks, and their resulting bad consequences. This text ends with

⁷ I have not been able to locate this short text in the sources available to me. The ending of the text proves to be from verse 468 of the *Jinacaritaya* according to the online version of the *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana CD* of the Pāli *Tiṭṭaka* published by the Vipassana Research Institute, Dhamma Giri, Isatpuri, near Mumbai, India, [n.d.] accessed at <http://www.tipitaka.org> on June 9, 2010 and June 15, 2010; but the beginning of the text is different. The beginning occurs, though, elsewhere for at least another *Patthanā Gāthā* that I have seen.

a statement of *kusalakarma*-s ‘good deeds’ and their results for the individual layman. The three texts are framed with texts that focus on the earnest striving for enlightenment, which texts are here made accessible to a lay Sinhalese audience.

That a text popular among Sinhalese Buddhist monks who preach appears early in the collection, especially in the context of the British Library manuscript of the *Manussavinaya* that shows that the *Upāsakamanussavinaya* served as the basis for sermons as well, suggests that this was indeed the purpose of this manuscript.

