

## ERNEST BENDER

### A FRAGMENTED MANUSCRIPT RECOVERED

In the course of my search for Jaina kathā-texts composed in Māru-Gūrjara-Bhāṣā<sup>1</sup>, I found in the collection of the National Museum in New Delhi a manuscript titled « Dhanyavilāsa »<sup>2</sup>. The colophon is gone. Before its acquisition by the museum an unknown hand had subjected it to the abuse suffered by far too many Indian illustrated manuscripts; the folios containing paintings were preserved and the remaining discarded.

The thirty-eight extant folios of this manuscript, measuring  $4 \frac{5}{8} \times 9 \frac{3}{16}$  inches, contain forty-three paintings, several of which depict more than one scene. The text, portions of which are in red, is written across the smaller measure. Executed in a laukik Rājasthānī style, the illustrations manifest a striking quality which can easily hold its own when compared with other miniature paintings of the same period (the latter half of the ~~seventeenth century, A.D.~~) acknowledged as masterpieces of the genre.

The contents of the paintings quickened my attention for they were reminiscent of elements in the plot of the Māru-Gūrjara

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1. I.e., Old Gujarātī.

2. The National Museum's *Dhanyavilāsa*, No. 51.230, is the only manuscript of this text with illustrations. I am greatly indebted to Dr. C. Sivaramamurti, the then Keeper of the Museum, and his staff for generously making available all facilities for my work in the Museum's manuscript collection.

Dhanna-Sālibhadda-Carita<sup>3</sup>, as well as that of the tale of Dhanya as it is related in Sanskrit in the Kathākośa<sup>4</sup>. The illustrations of the manuscripts under review follow the scenario of the latter.

The hero, born the son of a wealthy merchant, is considered fortunate, for on the day of his birth a great treasure of jewels and gold had been uncovered. He is named « Dhanya » (i.e. Skt. *dhanya* « bestowing wealth, fortunate, auspicious ») and is reared the favorite of his parents. In the course of time, his four elder brothers, envious of him, request their father to test Dhanya's mercantile skills against theirs. The father acquiesces and gives to his five sons thirty-two rupees, each, instructing them to engage in trade. They go off.

Dhanya buys a ram which defeats that of a prince in a fight for a stake of one thousand *dīnāras*<sup>5</sup>. His ram, the victor, Dhanya returns to his home with the prize, together with the ram. His brothers have come back failures. Requested a second test, the father provides each of his sons with sixty cowries. They depart only to return with success denied, once again, — except for Dhanya who had purchased a bedstead in which was secreted the fortune of a miserly merchant, recently deceased. Dhanya carries it back home. When he happens to remove the pegs from the frame, to the astonishment of everyone, a stream of jewels pour out of the bores. He gives them to his parents.

This festers the hostility of his brothers and they plan to do away with him. When one of his sisters-in-law warns Dhanya, he decides to leave home.

One day, as Dhanya passes on his way, a farmer takes note of his special demeanor and invites him to dine at his home. He takes Dhanya there and, after instructing his wife to serve Dhanya

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3. Skt. Dhanya-Sālibhadra-Carita. See ERNEST BENDER, *Illustration in Jaina Manuscripts*, in IT, 11 (1983), pp. 275-6.

4. C. H. TAWNEY, *The Kathākośa or Treasury of Stories*, Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1895; reprinted by Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 78-85.

5. See ERNEST BENDER, *The Function of Rāgas in Jaina Kathā Literature*, in IT 12 (1984), p. 52, for the observation in connection with figure 6, containing the depiction of the ram-fight and its possible relation to the Kāccheli Rāgiṇī of Dīpak.

a rice pudding, the farmer returns to his field. He unearths a jar full of *dīnāras*. Thinking this stroke of good fortune due to Dhanya, he offers the treasure-trove to Dhanya who insists that he keep it and continues on his way. Eftsoons he reaches the city of Rājagṛha where he stops to rest in a garden. He is seen there by a gardener who, marking his mien, invites him to be his guest. Dhanya accepts.

At that time a daughter is born to Śreṇika, the king of that area<sup>6</sup>. The king issues a decree that female children born on that day be reared with the princess. Two infant girls are brought to the palace — one, that gardener's daughter, named Puṣpavatī, and the other, Subhadrā, of a certain merchant Gobhadra and his wife Bhadrā.

Time passes. The pubescent Puṣpavatī sees Dhanya and falls in love with him. Intent on having him for a husband, she contrives for the princess to be similarly smitten. The princess then obtains the permission of her father, Śreṇika, to marry Dhanya. She further requests that he be married to her companions, Puṣpavatī and Subhadrā, as well. The king agrees. At this point the tale of Dhanya merges with that of Śālibhadra, Subhadrā's brother<sup>7</sup>.

Some years afterward I found in the collection of the L. D. Institute of Ahmedabad two manuscripts<sup>8</sup> which matched the extant text of the National Museum's *Dhanyavilāsa*. The colophon of each contains the name of the author, Kalyāṇ, the title of the text « Dhanyavilāsa », and the date of composition, V.S. 1685 (1620 A.D.). One of the colophons bears the date of copying, V.S.

6. Śreṇika has been identified with Bimbisāra, king of Magadha, c. 546-494 B.C (following the dating of A. L. Basham), — and, to be sure, the manuscript gives his name once as "Bambasāra" or "Bhambhasāra".

7. See fn. 3, above.

8. The accession numbers are L.D.I.I. (L. D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad): D/675 9886 and 11831. (Other manuscripts I have examined elsewhere are incomplete, without colophons). I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank Paṇḍit Dalsukh Malvania and Dr. Nagin J. Shah for their immeasurable assistance during my visits to the Institute. The happy memories of the cordial teas with them and their amiable staff are ever-green to me.

1707 (1650 A.D.). A check in the *Jaina Gūṛjara Kavio*<sup>9</sup>, the index of Jain poets, corroborates this information: Kalyāṇ Bīj is entered as the author of the *Dhanyavilāsa Rāsa*, composed in V.S. 1685. The entry also gives the opening and closing verses which match those of the two full manuscripts of the L. D. Institute collection.

The paintings selected illustrate the genius of the painter. They depict key incidents in the story. In the first figure is seen the fight between Dhanya's ram and that of the prince. Figure 2 shows Dhanya's return to his home with the miser's bedstead which had contained the jewels, shown here in a heap at the bottom of the picture. The other four men in the picture are his brothers who appear dismayed, especially the one in the lower right-hand corner of the picture. In the upper half of figure 3 Dhanya is being served by the farmer's wife and in the lower half her husband ploughs his field from which he is shortly to unearth a jar of *dināras*. Figure 4 is divided into three panels (The small blank square in the upper left-hand corner of the top panel and the missing right-hand half of the bottom panel may originally have been glued replacements for the final execution of the painting which became detached. The latter seems to have the traces of a line drawing). In the top panel Dhanya and Śālibhadra receive *Dīkṣā* (Initiation) from Mahāvīra. Note the golden hue of the Tīrthaṃkara. The proselytes are pulling out their hair in the prescribed five handfuls. The structure in which Mahāvīra is seated represents a *Samavasaraṇa*, which tradition relates is a structure prepared by divine beings for a Tīrthaṃkara's appearance on earth to preach the Jaina Faith. The middle panel shows Dhanya's eight wives, as in the Dhanna-Śālibhadda-Carita — not the three of the Kathākośa version. Their white garb indicates they have undertaken *Dīkṣā* with him. The bottom panel would have originally contained the two palanquins in which the wives had been brought to the *Samavasaraṇa*. Dhanya and Śālibhadra would have come on horse or elephant. The two are shown in figure 5 breaking their severe fast with milk at the hands of the

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9. MOHANLAL DALICAND DESAI, *Jaina Gūṛjara Kavio*, pratham bhāg, Śrī Jaina Svetaṃbara Kanfarans, Mumbai, V.S. 1982 (A.D. 1926), pp. 526-527.

latter's mother of his previous existence, as predicted by Mahāvīra. She is a *mahīyārī*, a milkwoman. Note the feline creature tied to the tree. In figure 6 the two heroes lie on their *santhāro*, the stone bed upon which they have determined to carry out their final fast onto death. At the right stand Śālibhadra's mother of the present existence, Bhadrā, and King Śreṇika with his favorite son, the clever prime-minister, Abhayakumāra. The six women represent several of Śālibhadra's wives.