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Mahāmaudgalyāyana’s Sermon on the Letting-in And not Letting-in (of Sensitive Influences) 

by E. Waldschmidt

In the Chinese translation of the Samyuktāgama (Tsa-a-han-ching) we come across a Sūtra corresponding to the Avassutapariyāya (also called An-avassutapariyāya) in the Saḷāyatanasamyutta of the Saṁyuttanikāya. The substance of the text is a discourse addressed by Mahāmoggallāna (M., Skt. Mahāmaudgalyāyana) to his fellow monks on their request and in the place of the Buddha who does not feel well. M. preaches upon the letting in and not letting in of sensitive influences through the eye and the other organs of sense. This is the common base of the two versions, Pāli (P) and Chinese (C).

In an introductory part of the discourse we are informed of the sojourn of the Buddha among the Sakyas (Skt. Śākyas) in the Banyan grove near Kapilavatthu (Kapilavastu) at a time when the inhabitants of the town had just built a new assembly hall. The Exalted One was invited to be the first to make use of it, to which he consents. In fixed phrases which are met with in the canon at different places we are informed (a) of the preparations by the Sakyas to get the hall ready for its inauguration by the Buddha, (b) of the Master’s arrival there, (c) of the order in which he, his pupils and the inhabitants of the town take their seats inside the hall, and (d) of the unspecified sermon with which the Buddha pleases the audience till late at night. Then he dismisses the Sakya and asks M. to continue in edifying the monks with a speech on a self-chosen subject. Thereupon M. recites the Avassuta(dhamma) pariyāya characterized above.

A while ago my attention was drawn to two Central Asian Sanskrit Ms. fragments (Nos. 1416 and 1449) of the “Turfan Collection,” written upon on both sides with characters of the seventh or eighth century A.D. in Northern Turkistan Brāhmi, Type VIb. The larger piece (No. 1416) showed five lines of script and was part of the left side of a paper folio in Pustaka size.
No. 1449, very small, could be proved to belong to the same folio as No. 1416. It supplies 4-8 syllables of the text in lines 1-4 of the obverse and lines 2-5 of the reverse of the folio. The compounded text of the two fragments reads:

Cat.-No. 1416 + 1449

Folio 1[69]

O
1 syāḥ paścima[s] yā[h] uttarasyān=diṣaḥ trṇolkāṁ=upasaṁ-
hareta na labheta agnir=a(va)tāram na labheta ā[lam]-
(banam) ////
2 vaṁ manaso=pi dharmeṣu māra upasaṁ ○ krāmati avatār-
prekṣi avatār(a)ga(ves)[i] na labhate māra avat(āram) ///
3 bhavati n[o] tu rūpair=abh[i] bhūya ○ te śabdām gandhā[m]
rasāṁ spraṣṭavyāṁ dha[rm] (ām) + + + + + . no tu dharm-
air=abhi(bhūyate) ////
4 rasābhibhūḥ spraṣṭavyābhibhūḥ ○ dhar[m][a] bhibhūḥ abhi-
bhūr=anabhibhū(r)= + + + (pā)[pa] kair=akuśa[la](i)(r=dhar-
maiḥ) ////
5 [ky]air=āyatāṁ jāti[ja] rāmarāṇīyaiḥ saṃmukhaṁ me āyuś-
mantaḥ bhagavato=ntikāc=chru(tām) + + + + + .i . . + + + ///

R
1 sruto dharmaparyā[yah] avasrut-ānavasrutam vo dharma-
paryāyaṁ desayisye iti .[e] + + + + + + + + + + + ///
2 yanasya kathāpayasāănāṁ vi ○ ditvā utthāya niśīdati
paryamka[m] (=ābhujya ṛjum) [kā] yam prani[dh] (āya) ///
3 n=āyuśma[nt]aṁ mahāmaudgalyāya ○ nam=āmantrayati
sādhu sādha maudga(lyāyana sā)[du] khalu tvām maud-
gal[y] (āyana) ///
4 desāyaṁ punar=api tvam=abhikṣṇa ○ m=api bhikṣūnā[m] =
[va] srut-ānavasru(tāṁ dhar)[m] (a)[pa] ryāyaṁ desāya
ta ///
5 khaya tatra [bhagav]āṁ bhikṣaṁ=āma[m] trayati udgrhnī-
[dhv] (ām) bhikṣavaḥ avasru[t]-ānavasru[)] tāṁ dharm-
paryāyaṁ dh[ā] ra[y] (ata) ////

Thrice, in R 1, R 4, and R 5, the title “avasrut-ānavasruta dharma-
paryāya” is found. After identification and comparison with the

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corresponding texts in P and C it became evident that our text fragment sets in with the last part of M.'s discourse, and is followed by the Buddha's approval of what M. has spoken. The particulars are as follows:

M. ends his speech with two similes.9 Suppose, he says, there is a hut consisting of reeds or grasses, dried up, sapless and old. Then, if somebody with a bundle of inflamed grass comes upon it from the eastern, western, northern or southern quarter, or from below or above, in any case the fire would get access, would get a hold. Even so, Māra, the personified wickedness and seducer to sensuality, would get access, would get a hold, if a monk develops positive or negative inclinations on seeing an object with the eye or recognizing it through any other organ of sense. Furthermore, M. continues, suppose there is a tower or high hall built of firm clay and coated with fresh plaster, then fire would not get access when somebody with a fire-brand comes upon it.10 Even so, if a monk avoids positive or negative inclinations when using his senses, Mara would not get access, would not get a hold.

I am going now to present the partly restituted text and translation of the Sanskrit fragment which begins in the course of the statement just referred to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O (dakṣīṇa)syāh paścimasyāh uttarasyān disāḥ tṛṇolkāṃ upasamhareta na labheta āgnir a(va)tāraṃ na labheta āl(ambanam/)11 ++ ++ ++ ++ ++ + +12 ya)vaṃ manaso 'pi dharmesu māra upasamkrāmati avatārapreksi avatāraga(ve)śi na labhate māra avat(āraṃ pūrva-vat/)</td>
<td>(If somebody) should bring along (to a firmly built [= fire-proof] house) a fire-brand of grasses from the southern, western, northern or eastern quarter, fire would not get access, would not get a hold. (Likewise) Māra, who looks out for access, who seeks access, does not get access, does not get a hold, if he approaches (a self-restrained monk by way of the eye etc.) up to by way of the mind in the case of objects (of thought).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 (Such a monk) subdues visible objects, is by no means subduced by visible objects, subdues sounds, smells, flavors, touchable things, objects of the mind, is by no means subduced by objects. He is a subduer of visible objects, a subduer of sounds, a subduer of smells, a subduer of flavors, a subduer of touchable things, a subduer of objects of the mind. He is a subduer, is not subdued by evil, improper factors which are sinful, bring about rebirth, are connected with fever (affliction), result in pain, have the consequence of rebirth, decay and death in future.

3 In front of, in the presence of the Exalted One, reverends, I have heard, and in front of him taken up this discourse of letting in and not letting in (sensitive influences) (when once the Master proclaimed): “I shall preach to you the sermon of letting in and not letting in [sensitive influences]. Listen!’”

4 Then the Exalted One, having recognized the conclusion of the venerable M.’s speech, arose, took up the sitting position of an ascetic, stretched his body upright and collected his attention. Having settled his robes the Exalted One addressed the venerable
dhu maudga(lyāyana / sā)dhu
khalu tvam maudgalyāyana
bhikṣūnām avasrut-aṇavastru-
tam dharmaparyāyam) desaya-
si (/) punar19 api tvam abhiks-
ṇam api bhikṣūnām avasrut-
ānasrutam(tam dhar)maparyā-
yan desaya (/) ta(d bhavi-
syati dīrghatāram devamanu-
śyānām arthāya hitāya su)khaya (/)

5 tatra20 bhagavām bhikṣūn
āma(m) trayati (/) udgrhnidhv-
(aman) bhikṣavah avasrut-aṇava-
srutam dharmaparyāyam dhr-
ray(ata grāhayata vācayata ava-
srut-ānasrutam dharmapary-
āyam / tat kasmād dheṭoḥ /
ayam dharmaparyāyah hitopa-
samhiṭaḥ arthopasamhiṭaḥ śi-
lopasamhiṭaḥ brahmacaryopa-
samhiṭaḥ abhijñāyai saṃbo-
dhayevirvāṇāya saṃvartate
yāvac ca satpuruṣena pravra-
jitena śraddhāyā avasrut-aṇava-
srutu dharmaparyāya udgr-
hya21 paryavāpya tathā tathā
dhārayitavyo grāhayitavyo vā-
cayitavyaḥ /)

5 There, the Exalted One
dressed the monks: “Take
up, monks, the sermon of let-
ting in and not letting in (sen-
sitive influences), maintain,
keep and recite the sermon of
letting in and not letting in
(sensitive influences). For what
reason? This sermon will bring
about welfare, prosperity, mor-
al conduct, self-restraint (chas-
tity), will lead to higher know-
ledge, to enlightenment, to Nir-
vāṇa, up to: by an honest man
who has left worldly life
through faith should the ser-
mon of letting in and not let-
ting in (sensitive influences),
after taking it up and appropri-
ating it, be maintained, kept
and recited in exactly the
same manner.

6 (atha bhikṣavo bhagavato
bhāsitam abhinandānumodya
bhagavato 'ntikāt prakṛntāḥ /)

6 Then the monks, after re-
joicing in the speech of the
Exalted One, and agreeing with
it, went away from the Lord's
presence.
NOTES

3. The story of the building of an assembly hall by the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu is told with the same words in the Sekhasutta of the Majjhimanikāya (Sutta 53; Ed. PTS I.353-359). A variation of the text with regard to the owners of the new building and the monk entrusted with the speech is found in the introduction to the Saṅgītisuttanta of the Dīghanikāya and in its Sanskrit counterpart, the Saṅgītisūtra. Cp. E. WALDSCHMIDT, Die Einleitung des Saṅgītisūtra, reprinted in E. WALDSCHMIDT, Von Ceylon bis Turfan, Göttingen 1967, pp.258-278, especially p.259. In the Saṅgītisūtra the owners of the new building are the Mallas of Pāpā (P: Pāvā), and the monk who recites the Sūtra is Sāriputra (P: Sāriputta), the second outstanding pupil of the Buddha.
4. This framework is—just as the chief contents of M.'s speech—told similarly in the P as well as in the C versions.
6. The first transcript of the text was made by Dr. D. SCHLINGLOFF, presently Professor at the University of Munich, during his activity in the Berlin Academy of Sciences between 1954 and 1961. The identification and compounding of the two fragments is due to E. WALDSCHMIDT.
7. O = obverse, R = reverse. Akṣaras of doubtful reading have been put into square, restored akṣaras in round brackets. A cross (+) marks a totally missing akṣara, two dots (..) an akṣara not readable. In the restituted text below, letters in bold type mark the beginning of a line in the Ms. Restituted parts of the text which have not already been supplemented in the documentary transcription are printed in italics.
8. Each line of the Ms. is calculated to have contained about 50 akṣaras. /// means that another 12 to 15 akṣaras of the line are missing.
9. The following extract refers to the P version.
10. From the eastern, western, etc., quarter, full recapitulation. P (Ed. PTS IV.187.1-8): puratthimāya . . . . uttarāya . . . . dakkhiṇāya . . . . ce pi nam puriso ādittāya tinukkāya upasaṅkameyya neva labhetha aggi oṭāram na labetha aggi ārammaṇam.
11. The C version is very short at places. For instance, here it has simply: If fire comes up from the four quarters, it is not able to set it (sc. the high and firm house) on fire. T 2. 316 c.6-7.
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15. Cp. P (ibid. 22-24): adhibhū anadhibhūto / adhibhosi te pāpake aksule dhamme sāṅkilesike ponobhavike sadare dukkhavipāke āyatijāti jārāmaṇānīye. The corresponding Sanskrit phrase (used for the restitution of our text) is found in the Avadānaśataka II. 107. 3-4. Possibly the phrase has been shortened in our Ms.—For vipākya (normal vipāka) s. Edgerton BHSĐ s.v.—C (T 2. 316 c. 10-12) has: “If he is victorious over visible objects, victorious over sounds, smells, flavours, touchable things, and objects of the mind, he is also victorious over evil, improper factors which are sinful, inflaming, of painful results, and bring about future rebirth, old age, illness and death.”

16. Cp. the P sentence: sammukhā me tam bhante bhagavato sutam sammukhā patīgahitam . . . at a place corresponding to MPS 18. 4 (Ed. WALDSCHMIDT, p. 220). C (T 2.316 c. 12-13) has: “I have received this instruction from the Exalted One personally, (the instruction) which is named the sermon (dhammaparyāya) of not letting in (sensitive) influences.”


18. Cp. P (IV. 187. 26-29): atha kho bhagavā utthahitvā āyasamantam mahāmoggalānam āmantesi / sādhu sādhu moggalāna sādhu kho tvam moggalāna bhikkhūnaṃ avassutapariyāyāḥ ca anavassutapariyāyāḥ ca abhāsīti. The C version (T 2. 316 c. 13-17) is more detailed: At that time the Exalted One knew that Mahāmaudgalyāyana had finished his speech. He arose, sat down with his body stretched upright, collected his mind in front and addressed M.: “Quite well, Maudgalyāyana, have you spoken to the men this sermon which is very profitable, which is (of importance) far beyond measure, which will bring luck for a long time to gods and men.”

19. The insertion “punar api . . . (up to) . . . deśaya” which is not found in C has a parallel in the Sāṅgītiśūtra (Ed. Stache-Rosen), I, p. 206. 2.

20. For the restitution of the conclusive Sanskrit passages of our text, corresponding phrases in the Sāṅgītiśūtra (Ed. Stache-Rosen), I, p. 206. 3-4 were available. There is general agreement also with C where the Sūtra ends as follows (T 2. 316 c. 17-22): Then the Exalted One addressed the (whole congregation of ) monks: “You should take up the sermon of letting in and not letting in (sensitive influences), and preach it extensively to men. For what reason? In the interest of the perfection of morality, in the interest of the perfection of law, in the interest of the perfection of right conduct (chastity, brahmacyarya) etc. (continuation as translated in the right column above) . . . When the Buddha had finished his speech, the monks who had heard the sermon of the Buddha rejoiced at it and went away respectfully.

21. The phrase te (scl. dhammā) udgṛhya paryāvṛtya (tathā ta)thā dhārāyitavyā grāhāyitavyā vācayitavyā(h) is also known from the MPS (Ed. WALDSCHMIDT) 19.7 and 40.60.