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CONTENTS

I. ARTICLES

1. Buddhism and Political Power in Korean History, 9
by S. Keel
2. Mahāmaudgalyāyana's Sermon on the Letting-in and Not 25
Letting-in (of Sensitive Influences), *by E. Waldschmidt*
3. The Mahāsāṃghika and the Tathāgatarbha, 35
by A. Wayman

II. SHORT PAPERS

1. Vajrayāna in Gostana-deśa, *by H. W. Bailey* 53
2. "Our Buddha" in an Aśokan Inscription, *by A. K. Narain* 57
3. The Story of Vyāsa and Kāśīsundarī, *by L. Zwilling* 65
4. New Areas of Research for Archaeologists and 71
Buddhologists, *by G. Tucci*

III. BOOK REVIEWS

1. An Anthology of Buddhist Tantric Songs: a Study of 77
the Caryāgīti, *by Per Kvaerne*
2. Tibetan Medicine: With Special Reference to Yogaśataka, 81
by Vaidya Bhagwan Dash

IV. NOTES AND NEWS

- On Buddhist Text Information (B.T.I.) of the Institute 87
for Advanced Studies of World Religions (IASWR),
New York, *by R. A. Gard*

V. OBITUARY

- P. L. Vaidya, *by P. V. Bapat* 91

The Story of Vyāsa and Kāśīsundarī

by L. Zwilling

Aśvaghoṣa twice refers to a story in which the ṛṣi Vyāsa was kicked by a prostitute, once at *Saundarananda* VII.30, and once at *Buddhacarita* IV.16 where she is called Kāśīsundarī.”¹ Johnston notes: “The story is unidentified and it is uncertain if Kāśīsundarī is a proper name or not.”² The same story is referred to in the Tibetan translation of Udbhaṭṭasiddhasvāmin’s *Viśeṣastava* [Toh. 1109] verses 31a-b and 32a-b where she is called, with less ambiguity, ka śi [sic] mdzes dga’ mo³ or Kāśīsundarīnandā,⁴ and a version of the story itself is found in Prajñāvarman’s *Viśeṣastavaṭīkā* [Toh. 1110]. However, Prajñāvarman’s authorship of the relevant portion of the *Ṭīkā* is uncertain. According to the colophon it appears that the earlier translation by Rin chen bzañ po was made from a manuscript lacking the comments to twelve verses found at various places throughout the work (bar skabs su)⁵ and eventually, when no manuscript of the missing portions had come to light the celebrated Sa skya paṇḍita Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan dpal bzañ po supplied them himself.⁶ Unfortunately for us, he was so successful at imitating the style of his predecessor that we are unable to identify his contribution.

The translation which follows is based upon the *Viśeṣastava* and *Ṭīkā* edited by Bhikṣu L. Jamspal and published by him in Vārāṇasī in 1966. The text was established through a comparison

of the Peking and Derge xylographs.⁷ The edition is quite good; however it is rather badly printed with many vowels missing and broken letters, and lacks a critical apparatus. The text following the translation is substantially this edition [J] which has been compared with the following xylographs: Peking [P] Bstod tshogs CVIII, Ka ff.22b3-23a2 and 23a7-24a1; Narthang [N] Bstod tshogs CI, Ka ff.22a7-22b5 and 23a2-23b3; Cone [C] Bstod tshogs CCIX, Ka ff.22b2-23a1 and 23a5-23b7. When listing variants I have ignored the ambiguities of pa and ba and N's 'dugo and smraso for 'dug go, smras so, etc.

NOTES

1. In Johnston's edition this verse is as follows:

purā hi kāśisundaryā veśavadhvā mahānṛṣiḥ/
tāḍito'bhutpadā vyāso durdharṣo devatairapi//

2. E.H. Johnston, *The Buddhacarita* (1936); rprnt. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972) Part 2. p.46 n. 16. He seems not to have noticed that Kāśi-may perhaps be *metri causa* for the more likely Kāśī-, but see also Pāṇini 6.3.63 on the substitution of i for ī in proper names. As to whether it is a proper name, Weller, following the Tibetan ka śi [sic] 'i mdzes ma, translates "... der (Stadt)schönen von Benares . . .," Friedrich Weller, *Das Leben des* p.47, Translation p.31.

3. Peking Bstod tshogs CVIII, Ka f.3b2, 3:

ka śi mdzes dga' mo la ni/
rgyas pa yoṅs chags rnam par gyur// 31a-b
rgyas pa 'dod gduṅs g.yen spyo bas/
bud med kyi ni rdog pas bsnun// 32a-b

On the *Viśeṣastava* see my forthcoming article in the *Bhikkhu J Kashyap Memorial Volume* "The *Viśeṣastava* of Udbhaṭṭasiddhasvāmin."

4. See Mahāvvyutpatti 1057.

5. Not "a portion in the middle" as in *A Comparative Analytical Catalogue of the Tanjur Division of the Tibetan Tripitaka* (1965, Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, Tokyo) p. 2.

6. Peking Bstod tshogs CVIII, Ka f.48a7-8: [48a7] khyad par du 'phags par [sic] bstod pa'i rgya cher bśad pa/ slob dpon śes rab go chas mdzad pa las/ bar skabs su tshigs su bcad pa bcu gñis kyi 'grel pa'i rgya dpe ma sñed [sic] nas/ dus phyis śā kya'i dge [48a8] sloṅ kun dga rgyal mtshan dpal bzaṅ po źes bya ba/ dpal sa skya'i dgon par sbyar ba rdzogs so//

7. Verbal communication from the editor, April 22, 1978.

Translation

This is the tradition: Shortly after the Bhārata war, Vyāsa, despondent over the loss of his kin, wandered about and came to Vārāṇasī. In the middle of a street he saw the chief prostitute Kāśīsundarīnandā near a door surrounded by a large group of men. Attracted by the scene he went up and asked: "Whose house is this?;" and hearing of her virtues such as her beauty and so forth he was captivated and remained there. Then a servant said to Kāśīsundarīnandā: "There is a ṛṣi loitering at the door;" and she, fearful of his curse, personally welcomed him with the preliminary honors of worthy offerings, foot-rinse, and so on, bade him enter, seated him upon a cushion in a quiet place, and washed his feet. Vyāsa laughed, and she, taking it as a sign from him, knew that she had gotten her chance and said very charmingly: "Are you smiling for no reason?" He said: "I heard that you were skilled in all the arts yet you don't know how to massage the hands and feet." She said: "If you know how, stretch out your hand and show me." He gave her his hand and thereupon she felt that she had never before experienced such a touch even though she had touched many distinguished sensualists; and he, becoming attached and lustful thought: "I shall enjoy myself with her for a very long time."

.

Thus did Vyāsa remain enjoying unconcernedly the bliss of sexual pleasure with Kāśīsundarīnandā. On a certain occasion Brahmadatta, the King of the city of Vārāṇasī, became frightened of an enemy whereupon he ordered even the young (not to speak of the others) to dig ten ten-cubit trenches in one day. He also ordered Kāśīsundarīnandā. Although she sought a laborer with an offer of a large salary, she was unable to find one and became distraught. Vyāsa said: "Why are you unhappy? Give me a pick and a basket and I'll dig the trenches." After a while he went out. Having dug [for a time] the sun went down before the trenches were finished and [darkness] approached. Then Vyāsa thought: "It's twilight;" yet he did not return but stayed in that very place. The water clock, etc. indicated the day was over, and knowing it to be night, the king, ministers, and citizens became uneasy and made ready to go out. Some time later, a brahmin saw Vyāsa distractedly

digging a trench and after a while he [i.e. the brahmin] recognized him. The king, ministers, and citizens having heard from him [what Vyāsa was doing] went up to him, touched his feet, and begged his pardon but Vyāsa looked away and went on digging. Fearful of his curse, and knowing him to be digging Kāśīsundarīnandā's share, he [i.e. the king] sent her a message: "Make this great ṛṣi whom you have instigated to dig your share leave off." Even though she sent a servant girl three times he did not wish to get up. Then she herself got into her carriage, went there, got down, and kicked him in the head with her ankleted foot. "What has now upset you that makes you not leave off even when I have sent you word three times?" Vyāsa became happy and said: "It is because up until this I was very much in love;" and so saying he got up.

Text

(P22b3, N22a7, C22b2, J54) 'di ltar rjes su thos te/¹ bhā^{1a} ra ta'i 'thab mo 'das (J55) nas yun riñ po ma lon pa na/ rgyas (N22b1) pa ñe dus² phoñs pa dañ/ sdug bsñal gyis³ sems kyi rgyud (C22b3) žum pa dañ/ yoñs su ⁴'khyams śiñ⁴ (P22b4) ⁵vā rā ṇa sīr⁵ soñ ba dañ/ srañ bar na ⁶kā śī⁶ mdzes dga' mo žes bya ba'i smad 'tshoñ ma'i gtso⁷ mo ⁸žig/ sgo dañ ñe ba na⁸ skye bo'i tshogs⁹ chen pos bskor ba mthoñ ba dañ/ de¹⁰ ltad mo la žen pa'i yid kyis de'i (N22b2) thad du (C22b4) soñ (P22b5) ste dris pa/ 'di su žig gi khyim yin žes dris nas/ de'i gzugs la sogs pa'i yon tan thos pas sems phrogs pa dañ 'dug go/ de nas mñag gžug pa'i skye bo¹¹ žig gis¹² ¹³kā śī¹³ mdzes¹⁴ dga' mo la smras pa/ (P22b6) drañ sroñ 'ga' žig sgo na sdod (C22b5) ciñ 'dug go/ de yañ dmod pas 'jigs¹⁵ (N22b3) skrag ṇas mchod yon dañ/ rkañ khruś la sogs pa bsñen bkur sñon¹⁶ du 'gro bas bdag ñid kyis¹⁷ mdun ¹⁸bsus te¹⁸ / nañ du bcug nas/ dben par (P22b7) stan la 'dug tu bcug ste/ rañ ñid kyis¹⁹ bkruś so// rgyas pas bgad pa dañ/ (C22b6) des de'i²⁰ mtshan mar bzuñ nas glags thob²¹ par śes te/ rab tu (N22b4) dga' bas khyed rgyu med par 'dzum mam žes smras pa dañ/ des smras pa/ (P22b8) khyed ni sgyu rtsal thams cad la mkhas par thos na lag pa dañ rkañ pa²² mñe ba mi śes so// des smras pa/ gal te khyed (C22b7) 'di la mkhas par gyur na/ lag pa rkyoñs²³ śig dañ bstan par bya o// des kyañ (N22b5) de²⁴ la lag pa byin no// (P23a1) de nas des²⁵ ji ltar na 'dod pa'i skye bo khyad par can du ma dañ²⁶ reg (J56)

par gyur kyañ de lta bu'i reg pa sñon chad ñams su myoñ bar ma gyur pa (C23a1) de ltar tshor bar byas so/ de yañ de dañ lhan cig dus (P23a2) śin tu yun riñ mor mñon par dga' bar bya o žes yoñs su chags śiñ 'dod pa'i 'dod chags skyes par gyur to//

.

(P23a7, N23a2, C23a5, J57) de yan 'di ltar drañ (C23a6) sroñ rgyas pa ²⁷kā śī²⁷ mdzes dga' mo dañ lhan cig bag phebs par 'dod pa'i bde ba rjes su myoñ žiñ (N23a3) 'dug pa na/ dus 'ga' žig gi tshe groñ khyer ²⁸vā rā ña śī²⁸ rgyal po (P23a8) tshañs pas byin la phas kyi rgal ba'i 'jigs²⁹ pa ñe bar gyur nas/ gañ gi phyir (C23a7) gžon nu rnams kyañ ñin gcig la 'obs khru bcu bcu rkor³⁰ bcug pa'i luñ bsgo ba na gžan dag lta mos kyañ ci dgos/ (P23b1) de nas ³¹kā śī³¹ mdzes (N23a4) dga' mo lañ luñ bsgo³² ba dañ/ des gla rñan chen pos gla mi'i³³ skyes bu brtsal kyañ ma brñed³⁴ nas sems pa (C23b1) la žugs par gyur to/ rgyas pas smras pa/ ci'i phyir khyod mi dga' bar byed/ tog tse³⁵ dañ skon (P23b2) pa byin cig/³⁶ ñas 'obs brko bar bya o³⁷ žes smras nas/ ji³⁸ tsam na soñ te (N23a5) brkos pa dañ 'obs ma rdsogs par ñi ma nub³⁹ pa la mñoñ du phyogs par gyur to// (C23b2) de nas rgyas pas dgoñs ka'i dus la bab bo/ (P23b3) sñam nas ma log par de ñid du gnas par gyur to/ chu tshod la sogs⁴⁰ pa'i mtshan mas ñin mo rdsogs⁴¹ par gyur ciñ/ mtshan mo'i⁴² dus la (N23a6) bab par śes nas rgyal po dang blon po⁴³ groñ khyer ba dañ bcas pa sems (P23b4, C23b3) rnam par gyeñs⁴⁴ pa dañ/⁴⁵ de rnams⁴⁵ 'gro ba la brtson par gyur pa na/ ji tsam na bram ze gžan žig gis⁴⁶ (J58) 'obs brko ba la gyeñs ba'i sems kyi rgyas pa mthoñ ba dañ/ yun riñ mo žig na ño⁴⁷ śes par gyur to/ (P23b5, N23a7) de nas de las thos pa dañ/ rgyal (C23b4) po dañ blon po groñ khyer gyi skye bo⁴⁸ dañ bcas pa de'i thad du soñ ste/ rkañ pa gñis la gtugs nas bzod⁴⁹ par gsol ba dañ/ de gdoñ gžan du lta žiñ rko⁵⁰ ba ñid kyis⁵¹ gnas so/ (P23b6) de yañ dmod pas 'jigs⁵² skrag pa dañ/ 'dis⁵³ ni ⁵⁴kā śī⁵⁴ mdzes (N23b1, C23b5) dga' mo'i skal pa rko⁵⁵ bar śes nas de la phrin du bskur ba/ thub pa khyad par can 'di khyed kyi skal pa'i 'obs rkor⁵⁶ bcug pa las sloñ žig ces byas pa dañ/ (P23b7) des bu mo mñag gžug ma žig lan gsum gyi bar du gtañ yañ de lañs su ma 'dod do/ (C23b6) de nas de rañ ñid gžon pa la žon te/ 'oñs nas (N23b2) de las babs te rkañ gdub dang bcas pa'i rkañ pas mgo bor bsnun te/ (P23b8) gañ gi phyir da ni skyo bar gyur pas ñas lan gsum gyi bar du phrin bskur

na ci'i phyir ldañ bar⁵⁷ mi byed/ rgyas pa yid dga' bar (C23b7)
gyur pa dañ smras pa/ gañ gi phyir 'di ltar bar du brtse bas na šin
tu rjes su (N23b3) bzuñ ba yin no/ (P24a1) zes smras nas lañs par
gyur to/

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. J om śad. 1a. PNCJ bha. 2. PNC du'i. 3. PNC gyi. 4-4. PNC 'khyam žin. 5-5. PN ba ra ṇa sir; C ba ra ṇā sir. 6-6. PNC ka śi. 7. J gtsa. 8-8. PNC žig sgo dañ/ ñe ba na. 9. J tshags. 10. J de'i. 11. J ba. 12. PNC gi. 13-13. PNC ka śi. 14. J mdzas. 15. PNC 'jig. 16. PNC mñon. 17. PNC kyi. 18-18. PNC bsu ste. 19. PN C kyi. 20. PNC de. 21. P thod. 22. J adds yañ. 23. PNC brkyoñ. 24. P des. 25. C. de. 26. PNC adds śad. 27-27. PNC ka śi. 28-28. PN ba ra na sir; C ba ra ṇa sir. 29. P 'jig. 30. P rgor. 31-31. PNC ka śi. 32. J bsga. 33. PN ma'i. 34. PN sñed; C bsñed. 35. J tsa. 36. PN om śad. 37. NC add śad. 38. J ja. 39. P nug. 40. J sags. 41. J rdzags. 42. J ma'i. 43. J pa. 44. J gyañs. 45-45. PNC rnam pa de. 46. PNC gi. 47. J ṇa. 48. J ba. 49. PNC gzod. 50. PN brkod; C brko. 51. PN kyi. 52. PN 'jig. 53. PNC 'di. 54-54. PNC ka śi. 55. PNC bsko. 56. P bskor; NC brkor. 57. C om bar.