

DĀSAKUSAĀLAKARMAPATHA -
THE PATH OF TEN GOOD ACTIONS

That the avoidance of bad action constitutes good action appears to be a common concept in Buddhist literature. Attention has been drawn to this notion by the well-known scholar, Franklin Edgerton. Discussing the term *karmapatha* (course of action) in his *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*¹ he states that it seems to be a fundamentally Buddhist one, and that, as in Pali, it almost always applies to a set of ten good actions (*daśakuśala*) consisting of the avoidance of ten bad actions (*daśakuśāla*), namely three of body (taking life, theft, fornication or adultery), four of speech (lying, harsh speech, spiteful speech, idle or silly or disconnected speech), and three of mind (covetousness, malevolence and heresy). Noting texts where the ten good (*kuśāla*) or bad (*akuśāla*) actions are listed, Edgerton makes special reference to the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, which describes the torments suffered in hell by those guilty of each of the ten sins. The *Śikṣāsamuccaya*,² a compendium of Buddhist teaching compiled by Śāntideva, probably

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1. Edgerton, Franklin. *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*. Vol. II: Dictionary. New Haven: Yale University Press (1953) p. 170.
 2. a) Bendall, Cecil. ed. *Śikṣāsamuccaya*. A Compendium of Buddhist teaching. Compiled by Śāntideva chiefly from the earlier Mahāyāna Sūtras, St. Pétersbourg (1897-1902) *Bibliotheca Buddhica* I.
b) Vaidya, P.L. ed. *Śikṣāsamuccaya* of Śāntideva. Darbhanga, The Mithila Institute of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning (1961) Buddhist Sanskrit Texts No. 11.
c) Bendall, Cecil and Rouse, W.H.D. transl. (contd.)

as early as the middle of the seventh century A.D.,³ consists almost entirely of quotations and extracts from sacred texts,⁴ chiefly the earlier Mahāyāna-Sūtras. The extract describing the ill-effects of the ten bad actions, included in the *Sikṣasamuccaya* is from a text called the *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna-sūtra*.

In a recent contribution to *Kalyāṇī*, the Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka,⁵ I gave the Sanskrit text and English translation of a fragment of a manuscript which refers to the ten-fold classification of bad action made by the Buddha in the *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna*. This text also categorises the ten bad deeds into those of body, speech and mind, and describes the torments suffered in hell as the result of evil action without specifying a particular evil.

The *Supriyasārthavāha-jātaka* (SEJ hereafter), a metrical composition of the *avadānamālā* genre usually dated to about the sixth century A.D. or later,⁶ the text

Sikṣasamuccaya. A Compendium of Buddhist doctrine. Compiled by Śāntideva chiefly from earlier Mahāyāna Sūtras. London (1922) Indian Text Series.

3. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*. Vol. II, translated from the original German. University of Calcutta (1933) p. 366.n.2.
4. *ibid.* p. 366.
5. *Kalyāṇī*. Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Kelaniya. Volumes V and VI (1986-1987) in press.
6. Winternitz, *op.cit.* p. 291.

of which has not yet been published,⁷ contains four verses,⁸ which again categorise the ten bad actions into those of body, speech and mind and state their ill-effects concisely. The *SSJ*. is an adaptation of the prose *Supriyavadāna*, the eighth story of the *Divyavadāna*,⁹ a compilation said to have come in to existence in its present form between the years 200 and 350 A.D.¹⁰ This *avadāna* narrates the story of Supriya, a merchant of Benares, who went to a city called Badaradvīpa to bring a wish-fulfilling jewel (*cintamani*), so that he could practise generosity and satisfy the desires of all mendicants. At the end of an arduous journey undertaken at the suggestion of a goddess, with whose help and also that of Magha, a merchant of the city of Rohitaka, Supriya reached Badaradvīpa, where there were four *Kinnara* cities. On Supriya knocking at the door of each of these cities, four, eight, sixteen and thirty-two lovely *Kinnara* maidens appeared at each in turn and tried to lure him to become their husband, whereupon he could lead a life of ease and comfort. But, as advised by the goddess earlier, Supriya not only resisted their lustful enticement but also preached to them the good doctrine and received the wish-fulfilling jewels from them.

In his doctrinal discourse at the first *Kinnara* city, Supriya having spoken of the ten evils and their

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7. I have prepared an edition of the *Supriyasārvavāha-jātaka* based on seven manuscripts found in Tokyo and Kyoto and intend publishing it shortly. The text runs into 777 verses.
 8. Verses 464-467 of the edition referred to in note 7 above.
 9. Cowell, E.B. and Neil, R.A. ed. *The Divyavadāna* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (1886) p. 91-123; Vaidya, P.L. ed. *Divyavadāna Darbhanga*. The Mithila Institute of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning (1959) p. 58-76.
 10. Vaidya, P.L. ed. *Divyavadāna. op.cit.* p. XI.

ill-effects asked the *Kinnara* maidens to abandon them and to practise the ten good deeds, which here too, as in instances pointed out by Edgerton, implicitly involve the avoidance of the ten bad deeds. I give below the text of the relevant stanzas of the *SSJ*. and an English translation of them.

*śarīraṃ trividhaṃ pāpaṃ vaṅḍibhavaṃ caturvidhaṃ /
trayaṃ manasikaṃ tadvaḍ daśakuśalikaṃ smṛtaṃ //*

*sādattādanahiṃsā ca kāmamithyā śarīrajaṃ /
dīnasvalpayuṣāu vamaḥīnaṃ ante ca durgatiḥ //*

*mṛṣāvādaś ca paśūnyaṃ raudraṃ bhinnāṃ ca vācikaṃ /
kuṣṭhakayaś ca murkhaś ca bhartsyamano janojjhitaḥ //*

*abhidhyā ca paraḍrohaṃ mithyādr̥ṣṭiś ca mānaṣaṃ /
sarvāpriyatvaḍrohaṭvaṃ hīnaṅgaṃ tatphalaṃ viduḥ //*

Bodily evil is three-fold; that arising from speech four-fold; and that of mind three-fold. The ten evils are known as being of that manner.

Injury to life, theft and improper behaviour relating to the senses arise out of one's body, (their ill-effects being) shortness of life, poverty, not having a wife, and birth in an evil state in the end.

False speech, slander, harsh (words) and loose talk are (the evils) of speech, (their consequences being) a leprous body, dumbness, being reviled and being shunned by others.

Desire, malice towards others and false views are (the evils) of the mind. Being subject to the aversion and hostility of all and defectiveness of limb, are known to be their results.

The *Divyāvadhāna* version of the legend does not list the ten evils or speak of their ill-effects at the corresponding point of the story or elsewhere but merely states

that Supriya condemned the ten bad paths of action and praised the ten good paths of action.¹¹

However, the ten evils are listed and the advantages of refraining from them discussed in the *Badaradvīpayātravadāna*, a version of the Supriya legend found in Ksemendra's *Avadānakalpalatā*,¹² a work attributed to the eleventh century A.D.¹³ The text of the relevant stanzas as printed in Vaidya's edition of the *Avadānakalpalatā* is as follows.¹⁴

paracittam viṣam yeṣāṃ jananyaś cānyayoṣitāḥ /
parahiṃsatmahimsaiva pakṣas teṣāṃ niratyayāḥ //

paśūnyāsatyaparūṣyabhinnavācojjhitam vācaḥ /
sadaiva vadane yeṣāṃ teṣāṃ sarvāśiṣa diśāḥ //

abhidhyārahitam ceto vyāpāraparivarjitam /
mithyādr̥ṣṭivihīnam ca yeṣāṃ te satpatham śritāḥ //

daśākūśalamārgebhyo nirgatānām nisargataḥ /
ete kūśalavargasya mārgāḥ svarge nirargalāḥ //

The *Badaradvīpayātravadāna* has been translated into English under the title *Buddha's Journey to Badaradvīpa*

11. *ibid.* p. 72, lines 20, 21: *Supriyo mahāśārthavāho*
daśakūśalan karmapathan vigarhati daśakūśalan
karmapathan samvarṇayati.

12. Das S.C. and Pandit Hari Mohan Vidyābhūṣana ed.
Ksemendra's *Avadānakalpalatā* with its Tibetan
version, Bibliotheca Indica. 2 vols. Calcutta
(1888 and 1918) vol. I. p. 177-299; Vaidya, P.L.
ed. *Avadānakalpalatā* of Ksemendra, 2 vols.
Darbhanga, The Mithila Institute of Post-graduate
Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning (1959)
vol. I. p. 51 - 64.

13. *ibid.* p. VII-VIII.

14. *ibid.* p. 62, verses 173 - 176.

by Satis Chandra Banerjia.¹⁵ I give below his translation of the verses¹⁶ quoted above.

"Invincible is the party of him who holds another's wealth to be poison, regards another's wife as his mother and considers envy of others equivalent to envy of himself.

Constantly is he blessed by all the sides, whose speech is free from guile, untruth, harshness and heresy.

They are on the right path, whose hearts are free from lust of other's gold, exempt from all (mundane) concerns, and safe from looks of vain (longing).

To those blessed ones that have naturally escaped from the ten kinds of unhappiness (sins), the way to heaven is free from bar."

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15. Banerjia, Satis Chandra. *Badaradvīpayātravadāna* of *Avadanakalpalatā* (Pallava 6) translated as *Buddha's Journey to Badaradvīpa*. Calcutta. Journal of the Buddhist Text Society of India. Vol. III (1893) Part I. p. 1 - 11.
16. *ibid.* p. 10.