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Some Sinhalese Inscriptions of Circa Sixth Century

I have included in this paper eight short epigraphs in the Sinhalese language of about the sixth century, which have a bearing on the interpretation of a phrase of frequent occurrence in the inscriptions of that period. The decipherment of these records has been done from photographs of estampages very kindly placed at my disposal by Dr. C. E. Godakumbure, the Archaeological Commissioner, to whom I am indebted for permission to reproduce them.

A. Periyakaḍu-vihāra (See Plate II, 3)

The first of these records is from the site of an ancient monastery, now called Periyakaḍu-vihāra, near Nālava in the Ihala Visidekē Kōrale of the Hiriyāla Hatpattu, Kuruṇāgala District. At this site there are Brāhmī inscriptions, in pre-Christian characters, below the drip-ledges of four caves, the text of one of which has been published by H. Parker in his *Ancient Ceylon*,¹ an inscription of a king named Gamiṇi Abaya (probably Gajabāhu I, *circa* 112-134 A.C.), indited on the rock in characters of about the second century A.C.², and a rock-inscription of a king named Sirināga (probably the first of that name, *circa* 195-214 A.C.), in addition to the epigraph now published.³ It was discovered by me when I visited the place in 1931, and the photograph now published is of an estampage prepared at that time.

The record, which is of four lines, is in a satisfactory state of preservation, not one of its letters having become illegible. The script is similar to that of the Tiṃbirivāva rock-inscription of Kassapa I,⁴ and the record

1 H. Parker, *Ancient Ceylon*, p. 449.

2 E. Müller, *Ancient Inscriptions in Ceylon*, No. 8.

3 For an account of the inscriptions at Periyakaḍu-vihāra, see *Ceylon Journal of Sciences, Section G (CJSG)*, Vol. II, pp. 178, 180 and 214-5.

4 *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. XIX, p. 96 f, and plate facing p. 95.

may therefore belong to the last decades of the fifth or the first half of the sixth century. The ancient name of the monastery, the equivalent of P. Ekadvāra, is contained in this as well as in the other two rock inscriptions at the site.⁵ This name, it may be noted, was also borne by a monastery founded by King Sabha (Subha, *circa* 59-65 A.C.)⁶ of which the remains are seen at Vihāregala near Mahakālāgama in the Uḍḍiyankuḷam Kōrale of the Anurādhapura District, as attested by inscriptions at that site as well as at the tank called Pahala Kayināṭṭama in its vicinity.⁷

The inscription ends with the phrase *cidava vaharalaya* which, in a number of variant forms, has been found in the majority of Sinhalese inscriptions from the fifth to seventh centuries. Separated from this phrase by the name of the monastery, our record also contains the phrase *tamaha vasa ṇayanamaha*, noticed here for the first time. It is clear from the context that the phrase *tamaha vasa ṇayanamaha*, ending with an absolutive, refers to an action which preceded that recorded in the phrase *cidava vaharalaya*. What the action referred to in the first phrase was, it is not difficult to determine, for none of the four words contained in it presents any difficulty of interpretation. *Tamaha* is the genitive singular of *tama*, equivalent to Sanskrit *ātman* and Pali *ātuma* or *attā*, meaning 'self'. *Vasa* is the same as Skt. *vaśa*, and is found in the same form in Pali and Prakrit as well as in standard Sinhalese; among its meanings is 'subjection', *Ṇaya* is derived from Skt. *ṛna* with the addition of the *-ka* suffix, and is found in the same form in the modern language, meaning 'debt'. The word *namaha* has not been met with before, but in its present context it is reasonable to take it as derived from an absolutive form of the Skt. *nir-vah* which may mean 'to cease', 'to end' etc. The form *namaha* of the present record is the prototype of *nimā* in classical Sinhalese. The whole phrase may therefore be rendered literally as 'having ended the debt of his subjection', i.e. 'having settled the debt he was subjected to'. Now, this interpretation squares very well with that given for the phrase *cidavi vaharalaya*, and its equivalents, i.e. 'caused the cessation of slavery'.⁸ It is well known that, in ancient Ceylon, as it was in India, one particular class of slave was the *ṇa-dāsa*, i.e. a person who had submitted himself to slavery on account of a debt that he had incurred.⁹ In such instances, the payment of the debt, either in money or in services rendered, would automatically result in the cessation of the slavery caused

5 *CJSG.*, Vol. II, pp. 178 and 180.

6 *Mahāvamsa*, Chapter XXXV, v. 58.

7 *EZ*, Vol. III, pp. 162-169.

8 *EZ*, Vol. IV, pp. 132-3.

9 *Rasavāhinī*, Part II, Colombo, 1899, p. 18

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by it. The interpretation of the phrase is also supported by that of the similar phraseology occurring in the inscriptions that follow in this paper. This record and those which follow conclusively establish the interpretation that we have given of the phrase *cidavi vaharalaya* etc, when it came up for consideration for the first time in the course of the decipherment of an inscription.

Text

- 1 කළහයහ වසන නග
- 2 තමහ වස ණය නමහ
- 3 එකදෙරරජමහවහර වි-
- 4 -දව වහරලය

Transcript

- 1 Taḷahayaha vasana Naga
- 2 tamaha vasa ṇaya namaha
- 3 Ekadora-raja-maha-vahara c[i]-¹⁰
- 4 -dava vaharalaya¹¹

Translation

Naga¹² residing at Taḷahaya¹³ settled the debt that he had incurred, and caused the cessation of [his] slavery in the royal monastery of Ekadora.¹⁴

B. Galkāṭiyāgama

Five inscriptions in the Sinhalese script of about the sixth century are incised on a rock at the site of an ancient monastery at Galkāṭiyāgama, four miles south-west of Polpiṭigama, in the Hiriyāla Hatpattu, Kurunāgala District. These records are included as No. 101 in the List of Inscriptions

10 There are faint traces of the *i*-stroke of *ci*, though medial vowels, other than the inherent *a*, are rarely shown graphically.

11 After this are visible faint traces of the letter *ma*. It is not impossible that the phrase *ma pala sava satanaṭa* was contained in the last line of this record.

12 Pali *Nāga*.

13 A tank named Tuḷahaka is mentioned in the inscription of Gamaṇi Abaya at this place. The last syllable, which is the locative suffix, may be read as *-hi*.

14 Pali *Ekadvāra*.

forming Appendix F of H. C. P. Bell's *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey* for 1911-12, p. 118. They have also been noticed by the late Mr. C. W. Nicholas who has prepared eye-copies of them;¹⁵ an estampage of the records has been prepared by the Archaeological Survey. The inscriptions have been indited close to each other, three of them on the left side of the inscribed area, and two on the right side. That on the upper section of the right hand side is in letters much larger than those in the others. Some of the letters of this record have been worn away. The other four records are in a satisfactory state of preservation. The engraver has omitted one letter each in the records numbered II and III. Among the dated inscriptions of this period, that which is written in characters approximating to those in the records under discussion is the rock-inscription of Dāthopatisa at Andaragollāva¹⁶. It is very rarely that the writing shows strokes to indicate the medial vowels, apart from the *a* which is inherent in every consonantal symbol. Records No. I and III have *sadeva* in place of *cadeva* or *cidevi* in other records; they thus provide us with one of the earliest examples for the change of *c* to *s*, a phonological change which had a widespread vogue in the language of the later period.¹⁷

In records I, III and V, we come across the phrase *ṇa kena* before *cidavi* (or *sadeva*) *vaharala* (or *veharalaya*). In No. II also the phrase *ṇa kena* occurs in a similar position, but the letter *ke* has been inadvertently omitted by the engraver. From the context, it appears that *ṇa kena* has the same meaning as *ṇaya namaha* of the Periyakaḍu-vihāra inscription dealt with above. *ṇa* is obviously derived from Sanskrit *ṛṇa*, without the adding of the pleonastic suffix *-ka*. The word in that form occurs in the Mihintale tablets, in the phrase *lekam karā ṇa vū dāyak genā*¹⁸ and also in the *Dampiyā-aṭuvā-gāta-padaya*.¹⁹ *Kena* is to be derived from an absolute form of the root *kṣi* formed by the suffix *-ya* instead of the grammatical *-tvā*,²⁰ and with the addition of the conjugational affix *-ṇa* (**kṣiṇya*). It would thus mean 'having diminished or decreased', or 'having made an end of'. Used with a word meaning 'debt', it would express the idea of 'having settled' or 'paid back'. The word that would be appropriate in such a context in the modern

15 *Historical Topography of Ancient and Mediaeval Ceylon, JRASCB, NS, Vol. VI, p. 100.*

16 *UCR, Vol. XII, p. 104, plate facing p. 95.*

17 See *Sigiri Graffiti*, Oxford University Press, 1956, Vol. I, p. lxxxiiiif.

18 *EZ, Vol. I, p. 92.* In Wickremasinghe's edition of this inscription, the reading is *lekam karāṇavū dāyak genā* which fails to recognize *ṇa* as a separate word. As correctly read above, the phrase means 'having examined accounts and recovered any debts incurred.'

19 D. B. Jayatilaka's Edition, p. 172.

20 *Sigiri Graffiti, op.cit. Vol. I, p. cliii.*

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language is *gevā*, the absolutive of the verb *geva*, going back to a causative form of the root *kṣi* to which the conjugational affix *-ṇa* has not been added. The phrase *ṇa kena*, thus, has the same meaning as *ṇaya namaha*.

Inscriptions numbered II and IV contain the word *sayamala* before *vaharala*. In several other unpublished inscriptions of this period also, the word *sayamala* occurs in a similar position. The compound *dasi-paha*, used in place of *vaharala* in the Andaragollāva inscription,²¹ throws welcome light on the meaning of the word *sayamala* (which also occurs in some records as *siyamala*). *Paha* in *dasi-paha* has been equated with Skt. *pāśa* 'noose' or 'bondage', with which the Sinhalese *mala* is synonymous. Taking *saya* or *siya* as equivalent to Skt. *svayam*, the compound *saya-mala* would mean 'self-bondage,' that is, slavery that one has voluntarily taken upon oneself in consequence of a debt or some other reason. This interpretation of the compound *sayamala* gains support by the occurrence, in a few records of the period,²² of the phrase *ala-mala vaharala*, in which *ala* would stand for Skt. *anya*. Compare *alle davase* for Skt. *anyedyus*. *Alamala-vaharala* would thus be slavery enforced by others, as distinct from that voluntarily accepted.

I

Text²³ (See Plate I, 1)

- 1 කහබය පටය සමන
- 2 ගන ණ කෙන සදෙව වෙහර-
- 3 -ලය මහ පල සවස-
- 4 -නනට වයවය

Transcript

- 1 Kahabaya paṭaya Samana
- 2 Gana ṇa kena sadeva vehara-
- 3 -laya maha pala sava-sa-
- 4 -tanata vayavaya

²¹ *UCR*, Vol. XIX, pp. 102 ff.

²² For example, in an unpublished inscription from Rājangaṇē. See *EZ*, Vol. IV, p. 134.

²³ No attempt has been made in the readings that follow to restore the vowels where they have not been graphically indicated.

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Translation

Samana Gana²⁴, a resident of Kahabaya,²⁵ having settled the debt [due from him], caused the cessation of [his] slavery. May the fruit of this action be²⁶ for [the good] of all beings.

II

Text (See Plate I, 2)

- 1 දපුලදෙරන සම-
- 2 -න ගන ණ [කෙ*]න වදෙව
- 3 සයමල වහර-
- 4 -ල පල සවස-
- 5 -නනට

Transcript

- 1 Dapula-derana Sama-
- 2 -na Gana ṅa [ke*]na cadeva
- 3 sayamala vahara-
- 4 -la pala sava-sa-
- 5 -tanāṭa

Translation

Samana Gana of Dapula-derana, having settled the debt [due from him], caused the cessation of [his] self-imposed slavery. The merit [of this action is given] to all beings.

III

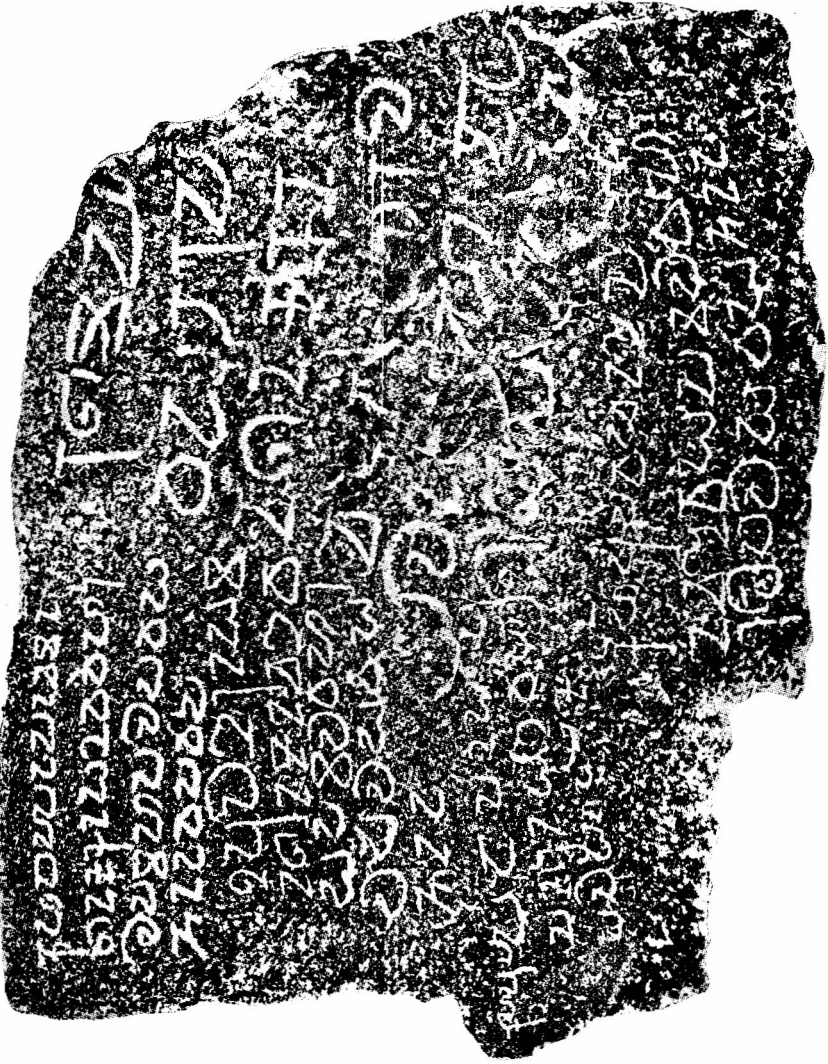
Text (See Plate I, 3)

- 1 කහපුය පටය දස[ග]ප
- 2 -ය ණ කෙන සදෙ[ව*] වහර[ල]
- 3 පල සවසනනට

24 This personal name occurs in the next record as well as in a number of documents in this period.

25 The place name *Kahabaya* of this record is found in Nos. III and IV in the form *Kahapuya*. These appear to be locative forms of a stem *Kahabi* or *Kahapu*, possibly connected with Skt. *Kāśyapa*, P. *Kassapa*. Comparison with No. IV indicates that *Kahabaya* or *Kahapuya*, without *paṭaya* which follows, is the place name, and that *paṭaya* takes the place of *vasana*, 'residing in' of No. IV. Possibly *paṭaya* is derived from Skt. *prasthāyin*.

26 *Vayavaya* is *vēvā* in standard Sinhalese.



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Inscriptions at Galkatīyāgama

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Transcript

- 1 Kahapuya²⁷ paṭaya Dasa[ga]pa-
- 2 -ya ṇa kena sade[va*] vahara[la]
- 3 pala sava-satanāṭa

Translation

Dasagapaya, a resident of Kahapuya, having settled the debt [due from him], caused the cessation of his slavery. The merit [of this] is given to all beings.

IV

Text (See Plate I, 4)

- 1 කහපුය වසන දය [ණ කෙ-]
- 2 -න වදෙව සයමල වහ-
- 3 -රල පල සවසනනට

Transcript

- 1 Kahapuya vasana Daya²⁸ [ṇa ke-]
- 2 -na cadeva sayamala vaha-
- 3 -rala pala sava-satanāṭa

Translation

Daya, residing at Kahapuya, having settled the debt [due from him], caused the cessation of [his] self-imposed slavery. The merit [of this] is given to all beings.

V

Text (See Plate I, 5)

- 1 [ඵ]රගමය
- 2 වසන රය-
- 3 -න ගන ණ කෙන
- 4 වි[දව් වහ]රල
- 5 [ප]ල ස[වසන]නට

27 C. W. Nicholas (*JRASCB, NS*, Vol. VI, p. 100) has read this name as *Kihapu*, but there is no *i*-stroke attached to the first letter.

28 This name may have contained another letter or two after *ya*.

Transcript

- 1 [Ga]ragamaya
- 2 vasana Raya-
- 3 -na Gana ṇa kena
- 4 ci[davi vaha]rala
- 5 [pa]la sa[vasata]naṭa²⁹

Translation

Rayana Gana, residing at [Ga]ragamaya,³⁰ having settled the debt [due from him], caused the cessation of [his] slavery. The fruit of this is given to all beings.

C. Aṃbagasvāva

Two inscriptions in the Sinhalese script of about the sixth century are incised on a rock called Maḍuvegala in the village of Aṃbagasvāva in the Divigandahe Kōrale of the Hiriyāḷa Hatpattu, Kuruṇāgala District. These inscriptions are included as No. 100 of the List of Inscriptions forming Appendix F of H. C. P. Bell's *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon* for 1911-12. Estampages of them have been prepared by the Archaeological Department in 1959, and numbered 7 and 8 in the List of Inscriptions copied during that year.³¹ With the exception of two or three letters which have been blurred somewhat, the two records are in a satisfactory state of preservation. Some of the letters are rather cursive in formation; the script may be ascribed to a period between Kumāradāsa and Dāṭhopatissa.³²

With regard to language, the phrase *paya-vasa-ṇayaṭa* in record No. I has not been found in any other document. *Ṇayaṭa* is the dative singular of *ṇaya* and means 'for the debt'; *paya-vasa* must therefore denote a particular kind of debt. *Paya* means foot, and *vasa* has been explained in discussing the phrase *tamaha vasa ṇaya namaha* in the Periyakaḍu inscription dealt with above. The phrase *paya-vasa-ṇaya* would therefore mean 'a debt for which one's foot is subjected'. What is intended by the expression becomes

²⁹ There are traces of letters of a sixth line.

³⁰ This might have stood for *Girigāma* in Pali.

³¹ *ASCAR* for 1959, p. 52.

³² Compare *EZ*, Vol. IV, plate 11 facing p. 114, and *UCR*, Vol. XIX, plate facing p. 94, IV.

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clear from the phrase *at-pā-vahalaṭ-giyākugen* in l. 21 of the Vēvālkāṭiya inscription, 'from one who has gone out for slavery (by working with) hands or with feet'.³³ The Galapāta-vihāra rock-inscription specifies the services, which the slaves attached to the monastery had to render to the monks, by the phrase *at-pā-mehe* 'services by hands and feet'.³⁴ It would thus appear that in old Ceylon when a person became a slave, it was understood between him and his master what particular type of work he had to perform, whether it was manual labour involving the use of the hands, or going on errands, which involves the use of the feet. It is significant in this connection that the record uses the phrase *yana saya di* before the statement that the debt was liquidated. *Yana* in this phrase is Skt. *yāna* 'going', *saya* means 'hundred' and *di* 'having given'. The import of the phrase is 'having performed a hundred journeys', on errands and other needs of the monastery, it is to be understood.

Another unusual phrase occurring in Inscription No. I is *ṇaya narada pavatavaya*. The last word is an absolutive form meaning 'having conducted', of which the subject is *vahara-ladana* (*vehera-laduwan*, in the later language), the trustee of the monastery'. The context would thus indicate that by *ṇaya-narada* was meant a formal action by the trustee of the monastery on the occasion of manumitting a slave. As such, *narada* may be connected with the Sanskrit root *nir-aj* 'to drive out or away'. In this connection, it is pertinent to note that the *Samantapāsādikā*³⁵ refers to the practice of pouring butter-milk on the head of a slave when he is given his freedom.

Another interesting form is *mayala* (*meyala*) in Inscription No. II. From the context, it is clear that *mayala* is the genitive singular of the demonstrative pronoun *me*, in the masculine gender. As such, it may be compared with the modern Sinhalese *meyāla* or *meyāla-ge*, where the suffix *-la* is plural. Originally, however, this suffix would have been honorific, as in the modern *āraccila*³⁶. ...

33 *EZ*, Vol. I, p. 247. Wickremasinghe's rendering of this phrase, 'from those who went out to do menial work', is too free, and does not bring out the particular significance of the words used.

34 *EZ*, Vol. IV, p. 206, l. 13 of text, and page 210, note 2.

35 P.T.S. Edition, p. 1001, *Takkam sise āsittaka-sadisā'va honti*, See also *EZ*, Vol. V, p. 60.

36 See also *Sigiri Graffiti*, *op.cit.*, p. cexiv.

I

Text (See Plate II, 1)

- 1 දෙකෙණ³⁷-ඵරෙය කසප පස මයගරජ-
- 2 මහවහරට පයවසණයට³⁸ ය-
- 3 -න සය දි³⁹ ඵ ණ³⁸කෙන³⁹ සදෙව⁴⁰ වහරල
- 4 මයදව වහරලදන ණය³⁸නරද පවතවය

Transcript

- 1 Dekaṇa³⁷ -ereya Kasapa Pasa Mayagara-raja-
- 2 maha-vaharaṭa paya-vasa-ṇayaṭa³⁸ ya-
- 3 -na saya di³⁹ e ṇa³⁸ kena³⁹ sadeva⁴⁰ vaharala
- 4 Mayadava vaharaladana ṇaya³⁸ -narada pavatavaya

Translation

Kasapa⁴¹ of Dekaṇa⁴²-ereya having completed⁴³ a hundred journeys⁴⁴ on account of the debt binding his feet⁴⁵ to the royal monastery of Mayagara,⁴⁶ and having thus settled that debt, caused the cessation of [his] slavery, Mayadava,⁴⁷ the trustee of the monastery⁴⁸ having conducted⁴⁹ the [ceremony of] debt-driving.⁵⁰

37 The symbol read as *de* looks like *gu*.

38 The cross stroke at the middle, which distinguishes the cerebral *ṇa* from the dental, is not perceptible. It is possible that the scribe wrote *na* instead of *ṇa*, which this word has in other records.

39 The stroke for the medial vowel has been assumed. The symbol for *da* here is different from that in other places of this record; but this form for *da* occurs in the Tiṃbiri-vāva inscription of Kassapa I referred to above.

40 *Sidavi*.

41 *Kasapa* is Sanskrit *Kāśyapa*, P. *Kassapa*. The equivalent of *Pasa* in Sanskrit or Pali is not certain.

42 Skt. *Dakṣiṇa*, P. *Dakkhiṇa*, Elu *Dakuṇu*.

43 *Di*, literally 'given.'

44 *Yana saya*, see discussion above.

45 *Paya-vasa-ṇayata*:— This phrase has been discussed in the introduction.

46 To be read as *Meyagiri* = Skt. and P. *Meghagiri*.

47 Read *Mayadeva*; Skt. P. *Māgha-deva*.

48 *Vahara-ladana*:— In later language, *vehera-laduvan*, literally, 'one who has received the monastery'. The plural form is no doubt honorific.

49 *Pavatavaya*, in later language *pavatvā*. It is possible that *pavatavaya* is a finite verb, being the prototype in the sixth century of the classical Sinhalese *pāvātvī*, which presupposes a form **pavatavayi*, and that the *i* in the last syllable has been changed to *a* due to vowel-assimilation.

50 *Naya-narada*. See discussion in the Introduction.



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1-2. Inscriptions at Añbagasvāva
3. Inscription at Periyakadu-vihāra

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II

Text (See Plate II, 2)

- 1 සී දෙකණඵරෙය කසප
- 2 පස මයගර රජමහ-
- 3 වහරෙ මයල වස ණ වෙ[කන] සි-
- 4 -දෙව වහරල

Transcript

- 1 Si Dekana-ereya Kasapa
- 2 Pasa Mayagara raja-maha-
- 3 vahare mayala vasa na [k]e[na] si-
- 4 -deva vaharala

Translation

Hail ! Kasapa Pasa of Dekana-ereya, having settled the debt by which this [personage] was subjected to the royal monastery of Mayagara, caused the cessation of [his] slavery.⁵¹

S. PARANAVITANA

⁵¹ It will be noticed that Inscription No. II is identical in subject matter with No. I, but for the omission of certain phrases contained in the first. Perhaps the more detailed document was set up by the person who was manumitted, and the other by the trustee of the temple. The names of places and persons are the same in both. With the text and the translation of No. II, see notes on the corresponding readings and names of No. I.