

The Great Author of Summaries— Contemporary of Buddhaghosa

BUDDHADATTA'S Manuals of Vinaya and Abhidhamma are now known to orientalists through the editions of the Pali Text Society.¹ In the Introductory Note to the *Abhidhammāvatāra*, Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids remarks: "According to the legend, Buddhadatta recast in a condensed shape that which Buddhaghosa handed on, in Pali, from the Sinhalese Commentaries. But the psychology and philosophy are presented through the prism of a second vigorous intellect, under fresh aspects, in a style often less discursive and more graphic than that of the great Commentator, and with strikingly rich vocabulary, as is revealed by the dimensions of the Index. . . . So little was the modestly expressed ambition of Buddhadatta's Commentator realized:— that the great man's death would leave others room to emerge from eclipse—a verse that forcibly recalls George Meredith's quip uttered at Tennyson's funeral—' Well, a —, it's a great day for the minor poets '!"

The legend that she refers to is found in the Pali Commentary on the *Vinayavinicchaya* and in the *Buddhaghosuppatti*. The former work was composed by the Sinhalese Elder, Mahāsāmi Vācissara, in about the 12th century A.D. and is still unpublished. In its introduction it states: "Ayaṃ kira Bhadanta-Buddhadattācariyo Laṅkādīpato sajjātibhūmiṃ Jambudīpam āgacchanto Bhadanta-Buddhaghosācariyaṃ Jambudīpavāsikehi . . . mahātheravarehi katārādhanaṃ Sihalaṭṭhakathaṃ parivattetvā . . . mūlabhāsāya tipīṭaka-pariyattiyā aṭṭhakathaṃ likhituṃ Laṅkādīpam gacchantaṃ antarāmagge disvā sākacchāya samupaparikkhitvā . . . balavaparitosam patvā . . . 'tumhe yathādhippeta-pariyantaṃ likhitam aṭṭhakathaṃ amhākaṃ pesetha, mayam assā pana . . . pakaraṇaṃ likhāmā' ti tassa sammukhā patijānitvā . . . Abhidhammaṭṭhakathāya Abhidhammāvatāraṃ, Vinayaṭṭhakathāya sa-Uttaraṃ Vinayavinicchayaṃ ca akāsi ti anussūyate." (= They say that when Ven. Buddhadatta was returning from Ceylon to India, which was his native country, he met Ven. Buddhaghosa, who was then proceeding to Ceylon at the request of the Elders of India, for the purpose of rendering the Sinhalese Commentaries into Pali; and after an interview with the latter he requested him to send the translated commentaries to him that he may summarize them. Having thus personally professed his intentions to him, afterwards he composed *Abhidhammāvatāra* by summarizing *Abhidhammaṭṭhakathā* and *Vinaya* and *Uttara-vinicchaya*s by summarizing *Vinayaṭṭhakathā*).

1. The present writer is the editor of these manuals. *Abhidhammāvatāra* and *Rūpārūpavibhāga* were published as one volume in 1915; *Vinayavinicchaya* and *Uttara-vinicchaya* as the second volume in 1927. (Oxford University Press, London.)

THE GREAT AUTHOR OF SUMMARIES

The *Buddhaghosupparatti* narrates the incident as follows:—“Buddhaghosa had traversed the great ocean in his vessel for three days. Buddhadatta, too, had been on the great ocean three days on his vessel on his return voyage. Through the supernatural power of Sakka and other devas, the vessels of the two theras, coming into collision, stood still. The merchants then observing, stared at one another terror-stricken. Of the two theras, Buddhaghosa, coming out, noticed the terrified state of his friends the merchants, and inquired of the other merchants ‘What monk, sirs, has come in your vessel?’ The merchants, the friends of Buddhadatta, said, “It is Buddhadatta.” Hearing this Buddhadatta came out, and seeing the thera Buddhaghosa, became highly delighted and asked, ‘What, Sir, is your name?’ . . . ‘Wherefore are you going?’ ‘I am going to translate the scriptures³ of Buddha which are in the Sinhalese language into the language of Magadha.’ ‘I,’ said Buddhadatta, ‘was deputed to go and translate the Scriptures . . . but I have obtained⁴ only the works *Jinālaṅkāra*, *Dantavaṃsa*, *Dhātuvāṃsa* and *Bodhivaṃsa*, not the Aṭṭhakathas and Ṭikas.⁵ If, sir, you are to render the Sinhalese version of the Buddha’s religion into the language of Magadha, render into the latter the Aṭṭhakathas and Ṭikas of the three Pitakas.’ He encouraged Buddhaghosa thus, and made over to him the myrobalan, the iron style, and the stone which had been given to himself by Sakka.”

This is mere legend; for there is nothing to prove this. If one were to compare the commentaries on Abhidhamma with the *Abhidhammāvatāra* and those of the Vinaya with the *Vinayavinicchaya* one would discover many divergencies in them. There is no common order or similar way of treating the subjects. In these manuals we find not only the commentaries but also the texts themselves condensed together. What Buddhadatta did was to summarize the texts as well as their explanations, mostly in verse, making them easy to memorize. Even at that period manuscripts were not much in use and memorizing would have been continued as before.

2. James Gray’s translation, (p. 17). Published in 1892, by Luzac & Co., London.

3. The author of *Buddhaghosupparatti* was of opinion that Buddhaghosa translated both the Scriptures and the Commentaries. Tradition in Ceylon clearly believes that it was only the commentaries that he translated. This fact too indicates the foreign origin of *Buddhaghosupparatti*.

4. Gray’s translation here is not correct. The text has the word “bandhitvā,” which means “having composed.” This is another instance to show that the *Buddhaghosupparatti* is not a work of a Ceylonese monk. Any learned Ceylonese monk would have known the fact that none of these treatises belonged to this early period. The names of the various authors of these works were well known in Ceylon. Only a monk dwelling far away from Ceylon could have confused these facts.

5. To speak of *ṭikās* at this period is absurd. It shows the carelessness or ignorance of the author.

Buddhadatta seems to be a great poet. The whole of his manual on Vinaya is in verse form, (and consists of 4,152 gāthas), while *Abhidhammā-valāra* is in verse and prose. The Commentator of the *Vinayavinicchaya* informs us how Buddhadatta was regarded as a great poet at his (commentator's) time. He refers to some author, unknown to us, who has praised Buddhadatta in the following lines:—

“ Mādisā pi kavī honti Buddhadatta divaṅgate.”

(= When Buddhadatta has passed away, we also shall be recognised as poets.) The same Commentator states in his introductory stanzas that Buddhadatta was extolled even by the great Commentator himself:—

“ Yo Buddhaghosācariyāsabhena
Viññuppasatthena pi suppasattho
So Buddhadattācariyābhidhāno
Mahākavi Theriyavaṃsadipo.”

(= The sage Buddhadatta, who was a great poet and was shedding his lustre upon the sect of the Theravadins, was praised even by illustrious Buddhaghosa himself.)

From these traditions we may conclude that Buddhadatta was, without doubt, a contemporary of Buddhaghosa. But the legend that he summarized Buddhaghosa's works cannot be accepted. It seems that Buddhadatta was somewhat older than the great Commentator. In this period the centre of the Theravadins all over Asia appears to have been at the Mahāvihāra of Anurādhapura. So many learned Theras from India would have come there to discuss knotty points of religion, and to learn and translate Theravādin texts into their own languages. Buddhadatta appears to be one of those who came here before Buddhaghosa and collected material for his intended manuals, but did not try to undertake such an extensive task as that of translating the Sinhalese commentaries, as he was then much advanced in years.

It is generally accepted that Buddhaghosa flourished during the 5th century A.D. We have shown that Buddhadatta was his contemporary. In the colophon to the *Vinayavinicchaya*, Buddhadatta states that this work was composed during the reign of King Acyutavikrama of the Kalabbha clan. The stanza which relates this fact is as follows:

“ Accut'Accutavikkante Kalabbhakulanandane
mahim samanūsāsanthe āradhho ca samāpito.”

Where this king was ruling is evident from his other statement (in the same place):

“Setṭhassa Coḷaraṭṭhassa nābhībūte nirākule
.....
iddhe sabbāṅgasampanne maṅgale Bhūtaṅgale.”

THE GREAT AUTHOR OF SUMMARIES

He states that he was residing at that time in the town of Bhūtamaṅgala, which was situated at the centre of the Choḷa country. If we are fortunate enough to find out the exact date of this king we can safely fix the date of both Buddhaghosa and Buddhadatta. There were two Acyutarāyas in the Vijayanagara Dynasty⁶ but as they have lived in the 16th century, none of them could have been the king in question. Yet it shows that their ancestors may have had such a name. Then we have to identify the Kalabhras (Pali Kalabbha), to which clan this king belonged. R. Gopalan, M.A., of Madras states in his "History of Pallavas of Kāñci" (p. 85). "As regards Kalabhras we find that their history is equally obscure. These people figure among the kings conquered by the Chālukya king Vikramāditya and Vinayāditya. They seem to have invaded the Pāndyan capital and having routed the ruling king established their rule. According to the Velvikudi plates the Adhirāja was ousted from Power and the country occupied by Kalabhras. . . . Kalabhras must, therefore, be people different from the groups known to us otherwise. There was a people occupying the Pallava territory—the northern part in particular—whose name has hitherto been read as Kaḷvar in Sangam works. They had a chief by name Pulli with headquarters at Vengadam (Tirupati). It is these people that are called Kalabhras in a Sanskritized form. . . . It is the irruption of these people into the south through the advance of Pallava dynasty that brought about a great revolution in the Tamil country."

The Pallavas were within the Choḷa country. The famous Pallava king, Sinhavishnu, is said to have defeated some Kalabhra chiefs, during his reign 575-600 A.D.⁷ As the Kalabhras appear to have ruled that country some centuries prior to the 6th, there would have been a Kalabhra king named Acyutavikrama, ruling Choḷa, in the 5th century in which Buddhadatta flourished.

In my Introduction to *Vinayavinicchaya*, I discussed about the Kālamba (= Kadamba) clan, but made no mention of the Kalabhras. Subsequently I discovered that the Kalabhras, but not the Kalambas, were in power in Choḷa during the 5th century. Although the word *Kālamba* is found in several places in the commentary and in more than one MS. of the text, I could find the word *Kalabbha* in only one MS. of the text. So I came to the conclusion that the correct reading of the text is *Kalabbhakulanandane* and not *Kalambakulanandane*. The Kalambas were a clan wielding power in Kanara and western Mysore. The eminent historian, V. A. Smith, writes about them: "A clan or family called Kadamba enjoyed independent power in the districts

6. P. 34. "Vijayanagara, Origin of the City and the Empire," by N. V. Ramayya, M.A., Ph.D. Published by the University of Madras.

7. Ch. VI. "History of Pallavas of Kāñci," published in 1928. Madras University Historical Series iii.

now called North and South Kanara and in western Mysore, from the third to the sixth century. Their capital Banawāsī, also known as Jayantī or Vijayantī, was so ancient that it is mentioned in the edicts of Asoka . . . Kadamba chiefs in subordinate position may be traced as late as the beginning of the fourteenth century; and the powerful Rayas of Vijayanagar, who founded a great kingdom early in that century, are supposed by some authorities to have Kadamba connections." (Oxford History of India, p. 198).

His Birthplace and Home.

In the colophons of his summaries we find the words: "*Uragapurena Buddhadattena racito*" (= composed by Buddhadatta of Uragapura). Where was this Uragapura? Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar, in his "Asoka," says that it is present "Uraiyur" near Trichinapoli. It is better to reproduce here his own words: "In Asoka's time there were more than one Choḷa and one Pāndya king. The territories of the three of these . . . have been identified on the data supplied by Ptolemy and the author of the Periplus. . . . The first is represented by "Orthoura, the royal city of Sornagos," comprised in Soretai. . . . Orthoura has been identified by Cunningham with Uraiyur near Trichinopoli. This was, therefore, the Southern Choḷa kingdom."⁸

Buddhadatta says that he composed the *Vinayavinicchaya* while residing in a monastery built by *Venḥudāsa* (or *Kaṇhadāsa* in some MSS.) at Bhūta-maṅgala. This town, he explains, was situated, as the nave to a wheel, in the heart of the Chola kingdom, and was very extensive, covered with plantations of coconut, palmyra, banana and sugar cane, and was beautified with lakes and tanks full of waterlilies and lotuses. When his manuals were edited, I could not identify the situation of this town. But in 1938, Miss C. Mīnakshi, M.A. of Madras University, after much labour, has identified this place with modern Paḷlivritti Bhūtamāṅgalaṃ in the Mannarḡuḡi division of the Tanjore district. After locating this place she published an article on the subject in No. 8, Vol. VI, of the "Current Science." In that article she states:—"Attempts have been made in recent times by a few scholars in locating this historical Bhūtamāṅgalaṃ in the Tanjore District. The editor of *Vinayavinicchaya*, Rev. A. P. Buddhadatta, remarks in his introduction: 'At present there are several places in that country (Tanjore) having their names ending in mangal. But I am still unable to identify this Bhūtamāṅgal with one of these places.' Later on, Mr. P. T. Sirinivasa Iyengar, at the suggestion of Mr. K. R. Subramaniam, maintained that Bhūtamāṅgalaṃ is same as Būdalur in the Tanjore District but this identification was questioned by Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri."

"The monastery in which Buddhadatta composed *Vinayavinicchaya* was, according to the description, located in the heart of the Chola country, 'sancti-

8. P. 38, "Asoka." Published in 1925 by the University of Calcutta.

THE GREAT AUTHOR OF SUMMARIES

fied by the river Cauvery.' It is therefore necessary to look for Bhūtamaṅgalam in the Mannarguḍi Taluq which is centrally situated in the Tanjore District . . . with a view to locating this place, I went to Mannarguḍi on the 29th December, 1937, and by making local inquiries discovered that there were two villages of the same name at close proximity. . . . The other which is about six miles from Mannargudi and situated on the banks of the river Vennār, a branch of Cauvery, appeared to me to be full of archaeological potentialities and this village is known in the locality as Pallivritti Bhūtamaṅgalam; Pallivritti is the name of another village which is adjacent to this Bhūtamaṅgalam and, as its name suggests, the land within this village must have been owned by the Buddhist monastery at Bhūtamaṅgalam."

His other works, *Abhidhammāvatāra* and the Commentary on *Buddhavaṃsa*, were compiled while residing at Kāveripaṭṭana. According to his own words this town, with a seaport, was prosperous, crowded with people, and lined with shops full of precious things. This town is identified by Vincent Smith with modern Puhar on the east coast of South India. He remarks (Oxford History of India, p. 144.): "Puhar, also called Pukar, or Kāveripaddinam, then at the mouth of Kāveri (Cauvery) river, was for some time a rich and prosperous port. It, with the other ancient ports in that region, is now desolate, a gradual elevation of the land having changed the coast line."

The *Vinayaviniścaya* was composed at the request of Elder Buddhasīha, his own pupil; and the *Abhidhammāvatāra* at the request of Sumati, an Elder of great repute, as its colophon states.

The Commentary on the *Buddhavaṃsa*, named *Madhurathhaviḷāsīnī*, (which runs into 249 pages in the Simon Hevavitarana Edition), was composed at the request of the same Elder, Buddhasīha. Here the author does not say that the supplicant was his own pupil, but speaks highly of his virtues in its introduction:

"Sakkacca saddhammaratena Buddhasihena sīlādiguṇoditena
Āyācito 'ham suciram pi kālaṃ
Tasmā'ssa samvaṇṇanam ārabhissāṃ."

(= I begin this work as I have been, often and again, requested by the Elder Buddhasīha, who is much devoted to the Norm, and well known for his eminent qualities).

Buddhadatta nowhere mentions the name of Buddhaghosa. If the legend, to the effect that the latter requested the former to summarize his own works, is true Buddhadatta would have gladly mentioned the name of such an illustrious person. Yet there is one forcible piece of evidence to prove that these two eminent persons were contemporaries: Buddhaghosa composed *Visuddhimagga* at the request of an Elder named Saṅghapāla of the Great Monastery of Ceylon; the same Elder has requested Buddhadatta to compose the *Uttara-*

UNIVERSITY OF CEYLON REVIEW

vinicchaya. The descriptions of this supplicant given by both authors leave no room for doubt about his identity :

Buddhaghosa speaks of him in the following lines :—

“ Bhadanta-Saṅghapālassa sūcisallekhavuttino
Vinayācārayuttassa yuttassa paṭipattiyaṃ
Khanti-soracca-mettādi-guṇabhūsitacetaso
Ajjhesanaṃ gaheṭvāca karontena imaṃ mayā.”

(= This was composed by me at the request of the Ven. Saṅghapāla, who led a pure and simple life, was devoted to the rules of discipline, and whose thoughts were adorned with the virtues of forbearance, gentleness and amity.)

Buddhadatta describes him as follows:—

“ Khanti-soracca-sosīya-buddhi-saddhā-dayādayo
Paṭiṭṭhitā guṇā yasmiṃ ratanān'iva sāgare
Vinayācārayuttena tena sakkacca sādaraṃ
Yācito Saṅghapālena therena thiracetasā
Sūciraṭṭhitikāmena vinayassa Mahesino.”

(= I composed this *Uttaravinicchaya*, being requested, with respect and affection, by the Elder Saṅghapāla, who is endowed with modesty and good conduct who desired the long-stay of the discipline of the Buddha, and in whose mind are deposited virtues such as forbearance, gentleness, discipline, wisdom, faith and kindness, like the (various kinds of) jewels in the ocean.

The similarity of the two descriptions may warrant the deduction that both these authors were speaking about the same person.

A. P. BUDDHADATTA.