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FRAGMENT OF A BUDDHIST SANSKRIT TEXT ON COSMOGONY

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The Aggañña-Sutta or "Discourse on the beginning of things" in the Dīghanikāya¹ is called by T. W. Rhys Davids in his "Dialogues of the Buddha", Vol. I, pp. 105 sq., "in many respects one of the most interesting and instructive of all the Dialogues. It is a kind of Buddhist book of Genesis.....when the evolution of the world began, beings were at first immaterial, feeding on joy, giving light from themselves, passing through the air. There was thick darkness round about them, and neither sun nor moon, nor stars, nor sex, nor measures of time. Then the earth rose in the midst of the waters, beautiful as honey in taste and colour and smell, and the beings, eating thereof, lost their brightness, and then sun and moon and stars appeared, and time began to run....." A corresponding text is preserved in the Mahāvastu, Ed. Senart, Vol. I, pp. 338 sq.; besides there are many versions and citations of the story, handed down to us in Chinese, Tibetan and other translations.²

Here I am going to notify a Sanskrit fragment—it represents one third of a folio only—found in the oasis of Sorcuq by the third German expedition to Sin-Kiang (Central Asia) between 1907 and 1908.³ It contains a few passages of the beginning of the story on primeval times and apparently has come from a manuscript of a Sanskrit version of the Aggañña-Sutta.⁴ After the provisional identification by Dr. Else Lüders mentioned in note 3, I examined, for the sake of a clear understanding of the text, some of the Chinese and Tibetan translations of lost Sanskrit originals, referred to already by former writers on the subject. There is no doubt, Sūtra 154 in the Chung-a-han-ching (= Madhyamāgama)⁵ has a near relation to the wording of our text, but even more closely related to it is a section in the Vinayavibhaṅga (on Pārājika 1) of the Mūlasarvāstivāda school.⁶ With the help of this parallel, especially in its Tibetan translation,⁷ it has been possible to fill up the gaps in our text and to give below in the right column a continuous translation of the Sanskrit transcribed in the left column.

TEXT⁸

Sanskrit

1. (03) bhavati sa samayo yad ayaṃ
lokaḥ saṃvartate (|) saṃvartamāne⁹
loke y(adbhūyasā satvā ābhāsvare
devanikāye upapadyante | te tatra
bhavanti rūpiṇo¹⁰ manomayā avikalā
ahīnendriyāḥ sarvāṅgapratyaṃ)(04)-
gopetā(h) śubhā varṇasthāyinaḥ sva-

Translation

1. There comes a time, when this world-system passes away. And when it passes away, (beings are mostly reborn in the class of the Ābhāsvara gods. There they have form, are made of mind, are not defective, with perfect sense-organs), provided with (all limbs great and small), shining, continuing

Sanskrit

yaṃprabhā vaihāyasagāmināḥ pr(īti-
bhakṣāḥ prītyāhārā dīrghāyūṣo dīrgh-
ham adhvānaṃ tiṣṭhanti |)¹¹.

2. (tena khalu samayena mahāpṛthivī
ekodikā bhavati ekārṇavā | tasy)(05)-
ā(ṃ) ekodikāyāṃ mahāpṛthivyāṃ
ekārṇavāyāṃ vāyunā śaraḥ saṃmū-
rchitaḥ saṃtanoti (tadyathā pakvasya
kṣīrasya śaraḥ¹² saṃmūrchitaḥ saṃta-
noty evam eva tasyāṃ ekodikāyāṃ
mahāpṛthivyāṃ ekārṇavāyāṃ vā)(06)-
yunā śaraḥ saṃmūrchitaḥ saṃ(ta) noti
(|) sa bhavati pṛthivīraso varṇasaṃpa-
nno gandhasaṃpanno (rasasaṃpan-
naḥ | tadyathā navanītam evaṃvar-
ṇaḥ | tadyathā¹³ kṣaudraṃ madhv
aneḍakam evamāsvādaḥ |)¹⁴.

3. (bhavati sa samayo yad ayaṃ loko
vivartate |) (R1) vivartamāne loke
satvā āyuhkṣayāt karmakṣayāt puṇya-
kṣayād ābhāsvarād devanikāyāc cavi-
tvā¹⁶ (ihatye manuṣyasabhāgatām āgac-
chanti | te 'pi rūpiṇo pūrvavad yāvad
dīrgham adhvānaṃ tiṣṭhanti |)¹⁷.

4. (tena khalu samayena)(R2) na sūrya-
candramasau prajñāyete na rātridiva-
saṃ na māsa(ṃ) ardhamaśaṃ na
ṛtuṃ na (kṣaṇalavamuhūrtaṃ prajñā-
yante na strī na pumān¹⁸ | satvaḥ¹⁹
satva ity ekasaṃ)(R3) khyāṃ gac-
chati (|)²⁰.

5. athānyatamo lolupajātiyaḥ satvaḥ
aṃgulyagreṇa pṛthivī(rasaṃ āsvāda-
yati | yathā²¹ yathāsvādayati tathā

Translation

in beauty, self-luminous, going through
the air, (feeding on joy, having joy as
food, of long life, remaining for a
long period of time).

2. (At that time the great earth was only
water, was only flood; then on that)
great earth, which was only water, which
was only flood, a scum-like substance
having congealed by the wind extended
(as a crust). (Just as the scum of cook-
ed milk having congealed extends
(as a crust), in the same manner on
that great earth, which was only water,
which was only flood,) a scum-like
substance having congealed by the
wind extended (as a crust). This savour
of the earth was endowed with colour,
was endowed with odour, (was
endowed with flavour. The colour was
just the same as that of fresh butter,
the taste was just the same as that of
pure¹⁵ honey of the Kṣudrā bee).

3. (There comes a time, when this world-
system re-evolves. And) when it
re-evolves, beings, on account of decay
of life, decay of action (and) decay
of merit, having fallen away from the
class of the Ābhāsvara gods (come in
this state here into the common lot
of men. They too have form etc. (see
§ 1) up to: remaining for a long period
of time).

4. (Now at that time) neither sun nor
moon appeared, neither night nor day,
neither month nor half-month, no
season, no (instant, minute, or moment
appeared, no fortnight, no period, no
year appeared, no female or male. 'A
being', 'a being') this was the only
designation.

5. Then some being of very greedy nature
(tasted the savour) of the earth with the
tip of his finger. (The more he tasted,

Sanskrit

tathā pratikāmkṣati | yathā yathā
pratikāmkṣati tathā tathā kabaḍiṃ-
kāropakrameṇa praparibhuktaḥ |²².

6. (R4) adrākṣ(ur)²³ anyatame satvā(s)
taṃ satvaṃ kabaḍiṅkāropakrameṇa
pṛthivī(rasaṃ paribhuñjānam | drṣ-
tvā ca te 'pi satvā aṃgulyāgreṇa
pṛthivīrasaṃ āsvādayanti|yathā yathā-
svādayanti pūrvavad yāvad²⁴ kaba-
ḍiṅkāro)(R5)pakrameṇa prapari-
bhuktā(h|) yataś ca te satvā taṃ
pṛthivīrasaṃ (kabaḍiṅkāropakrameṇa
praparibhuktās teṣāṃ²⁵ kāye dr̥dha-
tvam gurutvam prajñāyete śubhavarṇo
'ntarhitaḥ | andhakāro loke prādur-
bhūtaḥ |)²⁶.
7. (dharmatā kha)(R6)lu vāsiṣṭha
andhakārasya loke prādurbhāvāt sūr-
ya(candramasau prajñāyete) etc. as
in § 4.²⁷

Translation

the more he became desirous; the more
he became desirous, the more he feasted
by means of making balls).

6. Other beings saw that being feasting
on the savour of the earth by means of
making balls. (Having seen they also
tasted the savour of the earth with the
tip of their finger. The more they
tasted etc. up to): they feasted by means
of making balls.

And because these beings had feasted
on the savour of the earth (by means of
making balls there appeared solidness
and heaviness with their bodies; their
luminous appearance faded away.
Darkness became manifest in the
world).

7. (Now it is a rule), Vāsiṣṭha, that on
account of the manifestation of dark-
ness in the world sun and moon appear
(and so on as in § 4).

At this stage of world evolution the text of our fragment comes to its end. None of the Berlin manuscripts from Sin-Kiang I have come across as yet gives anything of the continuation of the "genesis" down to the manifestation of bisexuality and of social grades and distinctions.

NOTES

1. Quotations from the Pāli text refer to the edition of the Pali Text Society by J. E. Carpenter, Vol. III, London, 1911, pp. 80-98, especially to §§ 10-12 on pp. 84-86. For general information on the Aggañña-Sutta see pp. 258-260 in Malalasekera, Encyclopaedia of Buddhism.
2. Professor Hiän-lin Dschi of Peking gave in Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft (ZDMG), Vol. 97, 1943, pp. 318 sq. a German translation of the story on cosmogony as found in the Chinese version of the Aggañña-Sutta contained in the Dīrghāgama = Ch'ang-a-han-ching of the school of the Dharmaguptas (=Sūtra 5, Taisho Ed., Vol. I, p. 37b sq.). His article has the heading: "Parallelversionen zur tocharischen Rezension des Puṇyavanta-Jātaka".—In a note on pp. 317-319 Dschi supplied comprehensive bibliographical references for the episode on cosmogony. An earlier "Bibliographie sommaire de l'agenèse bouddhique" is found with Louis de La Vallée Poussin, in his translation "L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu, traduit et annoté", Troisième Chapitre, Paris, Louvain 1926, p. 204. I also like to hint at German translations of relevant Pāli texts and bibliographical references to be found in the paper of H. Günther, "Die buddhistische Kosmogonie", ZDMG, Vol. 98, 1944, pp. 44-83, especially on pp. 48 sq. —Some years ago the Aggañña-Sutta has

been submitted to textual criticism by Ulrich Schneider in his article "Ein Beitrag zur Textgeschichte des Aggañña-Suttanta", Indo-Iranian Journal, Vol. I, 1957, pp. 253-285.

3. The fragment (Cat.-No. 1583, formerly S 489) has not been recovered after the precautionary shifting of the Central Asian manuscripts from the Berlin Academy of Sciences to a mine at the end of the last world war. Luckily Dr. Else Lüders had made a first transliteration of the text many years ago on which our treatment could be based. She already referred to the Aggañña-Sutta in the heading of her transcript.
4. As passages on cosmogony, similar to those in our fragment, are found at many places of Buddhist literature, it is the vocative *vāsistha* (cp. §7) in line 6 on the reverse of the fragment (corresponding to Pāli *vāsettha*) that gives a decisive support to the identification; *vāsettha* is used in the Aggañña-Sutta by Lord Buddha in addressing a young brahmin of this name who, together with his friend Bhāradvāja, appears as the Lord's interlocutor in the Sutta. Besides, we find in the first line of our fragment some akṣaras read by Mrs. Lüders as: *rno (gau). a(go) durvarno (so ya)ṇ.* Apparently this has to be emended to (*suva*)*rno gautamo durvarno so 'ham*, corresponding to *pāsādiko samaṇo gotamo dubbanno 'ham asmi* (in the Aggañña-Sutta, l.c.p. 84).
5. Taisho Ed., Vol. 1, p. 674 b-c.
6. Chinese translation: Taisho Ed., Vol. 23, p. 635a, l. 19—b, l.8 (for our §§ 1-7).
7. Peking Ed. as reproduced by the Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, Tokyo-Kyoto, Vol. 42, 1957, p. 159.3.5-5.2 (for our §§ 1-7).
8. The passages or words preserved in the Sanskrit fragment have been underlined. O (observe) and R (reverse) together with the number of the line give the particular place from where the text comes. Throughout the text retranslated or restored letters or passages are given in round brackets.
9. The Sanskrit text of § 1 from this sentence onwards is known from the Vidyāsthānopamasūtra §§ 4-5, cp.E. Waldschmidt, Von Ceylon bis Turfan, Göttingen 1967, p. 374, and is also found in the Śakrapraśnasūtra, cp. l.c., note 16. There is a reference also in Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa, Taisho Ed., Vol. 29, p. 223b,l.1; cp. La Vallée Poussin, l. c. (note 1) pp. 204 sq.
10. La Vallée Poussin quotes the interpretation of the words *rūpinaḥ* etc., given in Yaśomitra's Vyākhyā (=Ed. Wogihara, Tokyo 1932-1936, p. 339, 9-14). The order of succession of the attributes in the three texts mentioned in the foregoing note is always the same.
11. Pāli (§ 10): *hoti kho so vāsettha samayo yaṃ kadāci karahaci dīghassa addhuno accayena ayam loko samvattati | samvattamāne loka yebhuyyena sattā ābhassarasamvattanikā honti | te tattha honti manomayā pitibhakkhā sayampabhā antalikkhacarā subhatthāyino ciraṃ dīghaṃ addhānaṃ tiṭṭhanti.*—Mahāvastu (I. 338.13-15); *bhavati bhikṣavaḥ sa kālo bhavati sa samayo yad ayam loko dīrghasyādhvano 'tyayena samvartati | samvartamāne ca punar bhikṣavo loka yobhūyena satvā ābhāsvare devanikāye upapadyanti.*
12. Cp. Vasubandhu, Abhidharmakośa, III. 46. b; translation of La Vallée Poussin, III, p. 140: "Ensuite l'eau, agitée par un vent que suscite la force des aëtes, devient de l'or dans la partie supérieure, comme le lait cuit devient de la crème". Yaśomitra's Abhidharmakośavyākhyā (Ed. Wogihara, p. 324. 10) explains: *yathā pakvasya kṣī-rasya śarī | strilīṅganirdeśaḥ śara ity arthaḥ | athavā śarasya bhāvaḥ śarībhāvaḥ strīprayogaḥ | yathā 'sau ghanībhāvena bhavati | evaṃ jalasyopariṣṭhāt kāmcanamayī bhūmir iti.*

13. Tibetan: *dper-na sbran-baḥi* (read: *buḥi*) *sbran-rtsi ma bskol-ba lta-buḥo*. The Mahāvvyutpatti (Ed. Sakaki No. 5728) has *sbran-buḥi sbran-rtsi* as Tibetan translation of *kṣaudraṃ madhu*. Misprint: *sbuḥi-buḥi*.
14. Pāli (§ 11): *ekodakābhūtaṃ kho pana vāsetṭha tena samayena hoti....atha kho tesam vāsetṭha sattānaṃ kadāci karahaci dīghassa addhuno accayena rasapaṭhavī udakasmiṃ samatāni | seyyathā pi nāma payasotattassa nibbāyamānassa upari santānakaṃ hoti evaṃ eva pāturaḥosi | sā ahoṣi vaṇṇasampannā gandhasampannā rasasampannā seyyathā pi nāma sampannaṃ vā sappi sampannaṃ vā navanītaṃ evaṃvaṇṇā ahoṣi seyyathā pi nāma khuddamadhu anelakaṃ evamassādā ahoṣi.*—Mahāvastu (I. 339.7-9): *ayam api mahāpṛthivī udakavradam viya samudāgacchet | sā cābhūd varṇasampannā rasasampannā sayyathāpi nāma kṣudraṃ madhu anedakaṃ evamāsvādo sayyathāpi nāma kṣīrasantānaṃ vā sarpiasantānaṃ vā evaṃ varṇapratibhāso*.
15. For *anedaka* ‘pure’ cp. Critical Pāli Dictionary, s. v. *anelaka* and H. Lüders, Beobachtungen über die Sprache des buddhistischen Urkanons, ed. by E. Waldschmidt, Berlin 1954, Akademie Verlag, § 45.
16. Hybrid for *cyavitvā*, *cyutvā*; the following *ihatya* is explained in Yaśomitra’s Abhidharmakośavyākhyā (Ed. Wogihara, p. 330. 25) as follows: *ihabhava ihatyah | adhobhūmika ity arthah*.
17. Pāli (§ 10): *vivattamāne loke yebhuyyena sattā ābhassarakāyā cavitvā itthattaṃ āgacchanti | te ca honti manomayā pītibhakkhā sayampabhā antalikkhacarā subhattāyino ciram dīgham addhānaṃ tiṭṭhanti.*—Mahāvastu (I. 338.16-19): *vivartamāne khalu punar bhikṣavo loke samsthite lokasanniveśe anyatarā satvā āyuhkṣayāya ca karmakṣayāya ca ābhāsvarāto devanikāyāto cyavitvā icchatvam āgacchanti | te bhavanti satvā svayaṃprabhāḥ antarīkṣacarā manomayā pītibhakkṣāḥ sukhashṭāyino yena kāmamgatāḥ*.
18. Gap fully filled up according to the Tibetan version in my English translation.
19. Tibetan: *sems-can sems-can žes bya-ba ḥbaḥ-žig-gi graṅs-su ḥgro-ḥo*.
20. Pāli (§ 11): *tena samayena.....na candimasuriyā paññāyanti na nakkhattāni tārakarūpāni paññāyanti na rattindivā paññāyanti na māśaddhamāsā paññāyanti na utusamvaccharā paññāyanti na itthipumā paññāyanti | sattā sattā tv eva saṅkhyam gacchanti.*—Mahāvastu (I. 338.19-339.6): *dharmatā khalu punar bhikṣavo yaṃ.....ime candramasūryā loke na prajñāyensuh | candrasūryehi loke aprajñāyantehi tārakarūpā loke na prajñāyensuh | ,.....naksatrapathā loke na prajñāyensuh.....rātrindivā loke na prajñāyensuh.....māsārdhamāsā loke na prajñāyensuh.....rtusamvatsarā loke na prajñāyante*.
21. Tibetan: *ji-lta ji-ltar myaṅ-bar byed-pa de-lta de-ltar ḥdod-par byed-do | ji-lta ji-ltar ḥdod-par byed-pa de-lta de-ltar kham-gyi zas-kyi rtsom-pas zos-par gyur-to*.
22. Pāli (§ 12): *atha kho vāsetṭha aññataro satto lolajātiko: ambho kim ev’idaṃ bhavissatīti? rasapaṭhavim aṅguliyā sāyi | tassa rasapaṭhavim aṅguliyā sāyato acchādesi tanhā c’ assa okkami.*—Mahāvastu (I. 339.9-11): *atha khalu bhikṣavo anyatarah satvaḥ capalo lolupajātīyo taṃ pṛthivīrasam aṅgulīye āsvādesi | tasya taṃ svādayati varṇenāpi gandhenāpi rasenāpi.....(I. 339.13-14) atha khalu bhikṣavaḥ so satvo aparakālena taṃ pṛthivīrasam ālopaḥaram āhāraṃ āhāresi*.
23. The fragment reads *adrākṣa*. Common is (3.sg.) *adrākṣit*.
24. The Tibetan has the full wording as in §5.
25. Tibetan: *de-dag-gi lus-la sran-ba-ñid dan lci-ba-ñid byuṅ-žin de-dag-gi kha-dog gsal-ba bzan-po gaṅ yin-pa de yaṅ med-par gyur | ḥjig-rten-du mun-pa yaṅ byuṅ-bar ḥgyur-ro*.

26. Pāli (§ 12): *aññatare pi kho vāsettha sattā tassa sattassa ditthānugatim āpajjamānā rasapaṭhavim aṅguliyā sāyimsu | tesam rasapaṭhavim aṅguliyā sāyatam acchādesi taṅhā ca tesam okkami | atha kho te vāsettha sattā rasapaṭhavim hatthehi ālum pakāarakam upakkamimsu paribhuñjitum | yato kho vāsettha sattā rasapaṭhavim hatthehi ālum pakāarakam upakkamimsu paribhuñjitum | atha tesam sattānam sayampabhā antarahāyi.*—Mahāvastu (I. 339.11-13): *anye pi satvā tasya satvasya dr̥stvānukrtim āpad-yante | te pi pr̥thivīrasam aṅgulyāsvādayensu | tesām api taṃ svādayati yāvat rase-nāpi.....* (I. 339.14-18) *anye pi satvā tasya satvasya dr̥stvānukrtim āpad-yante | te pi taṃ pr̥thivīrasam ālopakāarakam āhāram āhārensuh | yato ca bhikṣavas te satvā taṃ pr̥thivīrasam ālopakāarakam āhāram āhārensuh | atha tesām kāye gurutvaṃ ca kharat-vaṃ ca kakkhatatvaṃ ca upanipate | yāpi cābhūt pūrvam sānam svayamprabhatā antarīkṣacaratā manomayakāyatā pr̥tibhaksatā sukhasthāyitā yena kāmaṅgamatā sā antarahāye.*
27. Pāli (§ 12): *sayampabhāya antarahitāya candimasuriyā pātur ahaṃsu | candimasuri-yesu pātubhūtesu nakkhattāni tāra karūpāni pātur ahaṃsu | nakkhattesu tāra karūpesu pātu bhūtesu rattindivā paññāyimsu | rattindivesu paññāyamānesu māśaddhamāsā paññāyimsu | māśaddhamāsesu paññāyamānesu utusaṃvaccharā paññāyimsu | ettā-vatā kho vāsettha ayaṃ loko puna vivaṭṭo hoti.*—Mahāvastu (I. 340.1-6): *svayampra-bhatāye antarīkṣacaratāye manomayatāye pr̥tibhaksatāye yena kāmaṅgamatāye anta-rhitāye candrasūryā loke prajñāyensu..... tāra karūpā loke prajñāyensu..... nakṣatra-pathā loke prajñāyensu..... rātrīndivā loke prajñāyante..... māśārdhamāsā loke pra-jñāyante..... r̥tusamvatsarā loke prajñāyensu.*