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從馬鳴梵語宮廷詩看佛教梵語文化所涉及的問題(111-III)

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中文摘要：本研究計畫以馬鳴（Aśvaghōṣa）以梵語大詩體（mahā kāvyā）寫成的《佛所行讚》（Buddhacarita）及《美難陀傳》（Saundarananda）為研究對象，探討梵語宮廷詩最先出現於佛教（而非印度教）所代表的意義，以及其在整個印度思想史上所透露之時代意涵。

在印度的語言史上，梵語在西曆紀元之後慢慢展露頭角，爾後在亞洲各地（包括中國）開展長達千年以上銳不可當的語言文化攻勢。然而，通俗語或方言（Prakrit，）或者說是中世印度雅利安語（Middle Indo-Aryan languages）當為書面語，其在碑銘所出現的時間要比梵語早四、五個世紀左右。這種梵語在公眾語言上失勢幾百年之情形，被的法國的印度學家 Louis Renou 稱為「印度語言之大弔詭論。」而本人此一研究課題則反思印度書寫文化的另一個弔詭，即：為何古典詩（kāvyā）這種雕琢之艷情詩體書寫文化最先出現於佛教而非跟入世思想關係密切的印度教？

事實上，上述兩大弔詭相互關連。因為不管碑銘文書還是古典詩歌，皆已非吠陀時期或佛教初期之口述傳承，而需加以筆記以維傳承的書面文化。準此而言，方言在印度碑銘誌史上遠早於梵語，而佛教出家比丘以宮廷詩來書寫佛陀皆為印度思想史上之重大課題。馬鳴（約公元一、二世紀）之古典敘述詩要比印度教最為著名詩人迦梨陀娑（Kālidāsa，約公元四、五世紀）的詩作早三百年左右問世。佛教僧眾率先書寫梵語宮廷詩體來稱頌佛陀行誼及其教義，誠屬難解。

以梵語來書寫宮廷詩涉及印度宗教思想上諸多複雜問題。略舉其要如下。第一，用梵語來傳布教法明顯違反佛陀最初規定不准用梵語傳法之語言政策。為什麼紀元之後佛教僧眾在傳法時大膽違背此一戒律呢？第二，宮廷詩所描繪的世界基本上是入世的，而且用華麗詞藻書寫感官及情慾世界。如此進路跟禁慾的修行理念大相逕庭。在巴利文獻裡，佛陀要求僧眾遠離文藝詩歌好修行，讓佛法得以常存。為何宮廷詩卻於此時出現呢？第三，假如宮廷詩跟宮廷文化息息相關的話，則馬鳴的詩作跟其所處時代之現實政治有何關係？是否佛教此時面臨印度教復興的挑戰，必須求取現世權力護持，好能在思想傳播上跟其競爭呢？

本研究即為上述印度思想史上難解之謎提供可能的破解線索。

中文關鍵詞： 馬鳴，梵語、佛教、宮廷詩

英文摘要： In Indian linguistic history, Prakrit (dialect, either vernacular or provincial) or Middle Indo-Aryan languages appeared in inscriptions centuries earlier before Sanskrit is an unsolved riddle. If we consider Aśoka's Pillar Edicts in different Prakrits (3rd century BC) as the beginning of Indian Epigraphy, the first important Sanskrit epigraph-Junagadh Rock Inscription- appeared just around 150 AD. Why Sanskrit disappeared for many centuries as public language in India? Louis Renou considers this is "le grand paradoxe linguistique de l' Inde (the great linguistic paradox of India)." (Renou, 1956: 84) This research project is an attempt to provide a clue to the other paradox in Indian literary history: Why kavya (court poetry) started with Buddhism?

In fact, these two "paradoxes" are closely related to each other as they raise larger issues of the emergence of written or literary language in Indian intellectual history. Why Sanskrit was not first used in epigraph and why Buddhist ascetics wrote the court poetry before their Brahmana rivals? They are intricate puzzles which need extensive explorations. However, these intriguing puzzles about language have to be investigated in the broader religio-political context. It seems that the adoption of language in a religious tradition or a royal court in India is a calculated decision which has profound implications. How should we spell out the religio-political relevance of Sanskrit kavya?

In fact, to write in Sanskrit kavya inevitably entails several related issues for Buddhism and Indian intellectual history. One is the problem of using Sanskrit as the canonical language which is a direct violation of the language policy approved by the Buddha. Another one is: kavya as a literary genre depicting human emotional experience with sensational expression is in contradiction to Buddhism as an ascetic tradition. Also, if the court poetry has much

do with court culture, what are its political overtones?

Using A?vagho?a' s two mah?k?vya-Buddhacarita and Saundarananda- as reference points, this research project will explore grave implications of Buddhist k?vya and the above important matters will be closely investigated.

英文關鍵詞： A?vagho?a, Sanskrit, Buddhism, k?vya.

Kāvya and the transformation of Indian Buddhism

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Introduction

In Indian linguistic history, Prakrit (dialect, either vernacular or provincial) or Middle Indo-Aryan languages appeared in inscriptions centuries earlier before Sanskrit is an unsolved riddle. Louis Renou considers this is “le grand paradoxe linguistique de l’Inde (the great linguistic paradox of India).” (Renou, 1956: 84) This paper is an attempt to provide a clue to the other paradox in Indian literary history: Why *kāvya* started with Buddhism?

In fact, these two “paradoxes” are closely related to each other as they raise larger issues of the emergence of written or literary language in Indian intellectual history. Why Sanskrit was not first used in epigraph and why Buddhist ascetics wrote the court poetry before their Brahmana rivals? They are intricate puzzles which need extensive explorations. However, these intriguing puzzles about language have to be investigated in the broader religio-political context. It seems that the adoption of language in a religious tradition or a royal court in India is a calculated decision which has profound implications. How should we spell out the religio-political relevance of Sanskrit *kāvya*?

1.

It is generally agreed that Aśvaghoṣa, a Buddhist mendicant who is very likely to be the first poet in *kāvya* tradition. His *Buddhacarita* and the *Saudarananda* are considered to be the first mahākāvyas in Indian literary history. Lienhard suggests:

The oldest mahākāvyas we possess are the *Buddhacarita*, “The Life of the Buddha”, and the *Saundarananda*, “Beautiful Nanda”, by the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa. The poet, who cannot have lived before the first or after the second quarter of the 2nd century A. D., was born in Sāketa in the midland country (Madhyadeśa), grew up as a Brahman and was given the education of a learned Brahman based on a broad study of

literary and scientific texts, as many passages in his work reveal. Originally perhaps a Śivaite [sic], he was later converted to Buddhism, reputedly by a monk named Pārśva. While it is certain that Aśvaghōṣa embraced Hīnayāna, it is great deal more difficult to discover to what sect he belonged due to the paucity of material available...Buddhist tradition honours Aśvaghōṣa as one of the supremely important monks, indeed as the patriarch of late Buddhism... (Lienhard, 1984: 164)

The composite identity of Aśvaghōṣa indicates a complicated history about the emergence of Sanskrit kāvya. From what is depicted above, Aśvaghōṣa lived in the age of Hindu-Buddhist rivalries and the conversion from one religious tradition to the other seemed to be fairly common. The intellectual scene of this period is an open competition between Hinduism and Śramanism rather than total dominance of a particular religious tradition. More important, the revival of Brahmanical Hinduism must have made a strong impact on Buddhism and the rise of the Mahayana probably cannot be separated from the rejuvenation of Hinduism. ¹

The age that Aśvaghosa lived in must be vastly different from the earlier period when Śramanism aggressively challenged Brahmanism and its affiliated social system with otherworldly asceticism. Asceticism was a common religious practice among Śramanical traditions. As an ascetic tradition, mundane literary and entertaining activities devoid of religious value are emphatically condemned in early Buddhism. Consequently, Dramatic and musical entertainments which will distract a mendicant's mind from his/her religious endeavor are strongly censured by the Buddha as it is said in DN:

Whereas some Samaṇas and Brahmans, while feeding on food given by the faithful, are subject to visiting shows such as dancing, singing, music, displays, recitations, hand-music...fairy scenes... Samaṇa Gotama refrains from visiting such shows.² (DN, 1: 6)

¹ In the introduction of his *Buddhacarita's* translation, Olivelle remarked: 'Beginning with the Maurya empire and Ashoka, the Brahmanical self-definition was increasingly challenged and their position within the socio-political structures weakened. Recent scholarship...has seen the Brahmanical epics as implicit answers to the Buddhist challenge...This Brahmanical "counter reformation" was bound to attract Buddhist responses, and "Life of the Buddha" [Buddhacarita] can be seen as one such response.' (Olivelle, 2009: xxi-xxii)

² *Yathā va paṇ' eke bhonto samaṇa-brāhmaṇā saddhā-deyyāni bhojanāni bhujjivā te evarūpam visūka-dassanaṃ anuyuttā viharanti--seyyathidaṃ naccaṃ gītaṃ vāḍitaṃ pekkhaṃ akkhānaṃ*

These entertainments arouse audience audio-visual delight and pleasure. But ascetic life requires a religious commitment and inner restraint. An ascetic should have no interest in sensuality. A *samaṇa* would deviate noticeably from the norm if constantly distracted by literary and entertaining activities. *Akkhāna* means a recitation (Cone, 2001:6) but it could well be a recitation of poetry. In general, artistic and cultural activities which have nothing to do with religious life are rejected as unwholesome in early Buddhism:

Le bouddhisme primitif était, au moins en ce qui concerne l'Ordre, hostile aux arts et aux sciences, car l'opinion...état que l'art égare l'esprit et mène à une apostasie du *śīla*. La danse, le chant, la musique, les représentations théâtrales, les récitations (de poésie) et la poésie elle-même--tout cela était tenu pour aussi nuisible et corrupteur que la vie dans le luxe, que les jongleries, les jeux et autres divertissements vulgaires." (Lienhard, 1975: 76, n. 2 = 2007, n.2)

Indeed, composing *kāvya* as a profession is classified by the Buddha as a practice related to knowledge of fortune-teller or foretelling such as palmistry and other prognostications from the marks on the body. Like making an ominous or ill-omened prediction, what is proclaimed by those professions is not factual or true knowledge. Poetic fancy is one of them. These practices are condemned as low arts or pseudo-knowledge (*tiracchāna-vijjā*) To live by *kāvya* and other occupations related to fortune-teller are denounced as wrong living (*micchājīva*) as it is said:

Whereas some *Samaṇas* and *Brahmanas*, while feeding on food given by the faithful, make their living by wrong means of livelihood, by low arts, such as predicting good rainfall or drought; a good harvest or famine; wellbeing, danger; illness, health; counting on the fingers, art of counting, calculating, *poetic composition*, popular philosophy, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such low arts and wrong means of livelihood. ³ (DN, 1: 11; italics mine)

pāṇissaraṃ...Sobha-nararakam...iti vā iti evarūpā visūka-dassanā paṭivirato Samaṇo Gotamo ti.

³ "Yathā va paṇ' eke bhonto samaṇa-brāhmaṇā saddhā-deyyāni bhojanāni bhūñjitvā te evarūpāya tiracchāna-vijjāya micchājīvena kappenti--seyyathīdam: 'Subbuṭṭhikā bhavissati, dubbuṭṭhikā bhavassati, subhikkhaṃ bhavissati, dubhikkhaṃ bhavissati, khemaṃ bhavissati, bhayaṃ bhavissati, rogo bhavissati, ārogyaṃ bhavissati,' muddā, gaṇanā, saṃkhānam, kāveyyaṃ, lokāyataṃ-- iti vā iti evarūpāya tiracchāna-vijjāya micchājīvena paṭivirato Samaṇo Gotamo ti."

It is interesting to note here that *kāvya* (*kāveyya* = *kabba*, *kabya* or *kavya* in Pāli) is listed with *lokāyata* as low arts and wrong means of livelihood. It is a very severe censure. Here, it needs to be reminded that among the religious teachers contemporary with the Buddha, the materialistic pursuit of *lokavādin* is the most prominent feature in the intellectual arena. These *lokāyatikas* deny retribution of human action and ridicule worldly ethical conduct and relativize the good and evil. Audaciously, they carry their logic to its utmost extremity and proclaim their hair-bristling theories which combine humans' inability to act with their "possibility" of indulging themselves. They can be seen as true religio-ethical nihilists.

If *lokāyata* is the most popular philosophical circle at the time of Buddha, *kāvya* could be the most popular cultural making among literary circles. *Kāvya* resorts to emotional rather than religious experience to stir up listeners' sensual feelings. Latent religious feelings could not be evoked by *kāvya*. At the time of the Buddha, *kāvya* could also be *praśasti* (panegyric) to flatter royalty obsequiously. Those who make their living by composing panegyric for the court are probably what the Buddha reviled here. As suggested by Jamison that "poetic productions...were kavi's bread-and butter, royal encomia." (Jamison, 2007: 146) Kavi lost its prominent position as seer (*ṛsi*) or inspired poet (*vipra*) after the Ṛgvedic period. He then became a eulogist to produce royal praise or a balladist in propagating popular literary culture.

In general, *kāvya* uses embellished literary expression to appeal emotionally and aesthetically. Its elegant phraseology could be sensational to give a sense of delight or even pleasure. In the introduction to her translation of *Aśvaghoṣa's Saundarananda*, Linda Covill points out some principal features of *kāvya*:

Kāvya, a refined and rather fastidious type of literary Sanskrit, is marked by such features as varied poetic meters, ornate descriptive passages, numerous figurative expressions, euphonic blend of sound, and the purposeful evocation of aesthetic delight. (Covill, 2007: 18)

If "the purposeful evocation of aesthetic delight" is what *kāvya* for, then this idea certainly is not appreciated in early Buddhism. *Kāvya*, using elaborate sound and rhetoric and other poetic devices as a splendidly embellished

literary expression is disparaged in the Pāli canon:

In just the same way, O monks, in the future time there will be monks who won't wish to listen when those suttantas spoken by the Tathāgata-- profound, profound in meaning, otherworldly, connected with Nibbāna (or relating with emptiness literally)--are recited. They won't lend ear, won't aspire to perfect knowledge, won't consider these teachings worth acquiring and mastering. But they will wish to listen when those sūttanas made by kavis, the kāvyas, stylish in sound, stylish in rhetoric, the work of non-Buddhists, spoken by śrāvakas-- are recited. They will lend ear and aspire to perfect knowledge. They will consider these teachings worth grasping and mastering. ⁴(AN, 2: 72-73 =3:107, SN, 2:267)

The Buddha here makes a dramatic contrast between suttantas of the Buddha and of kāvyas. Suttanta of the Buddha as the embodiment of dhamma is profound and meaningful. The mendicant should avoid listening *kāvya*-recitation because of its emotive and seductive power. Indeed, *kāvya*s declaimed by the heretics is radically different from Sūtras well-spoken by the Tathāgata. While the dharma preached by the Buddha is other-worldly and relating with emptiness, the *kāvya*s spoken by lay people is this-worldly and connected with sensual attachment. Sheldon Pollock explicates:

From the first, *kāvya* was almost certainly composed and circulated...in writing; it was this worldly (*laukika*) in its themes, even when these concerned the divine...it was directed above all toward investigating the elementary forms of human emotional experience; at the same time (and for the same reason) it was centrally concerned with the nature of language itself, with its primary phonic and semantic capacities. (Pollock, 2006:13; underlines mine)

The reason why the Buddha gravely admonishes monks about the dangers of *kāvya* is clear. Above all, they are works of non-Buddhists with this-worldly concerns. *Kāvya* has much to do with depiction and investigation of human emotional experience (*vedanā*: feeling, sensation). In early Buddhism, *vedanā* is

⁴*Evam eva kho bhikkhave bhavissanti bhikkhū anāgatam addhānaṃ// Ye te suttantā tathāgatabhāsītā gambhīrā gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatapaṭisaṃyuttā// tesu bhaññamānesu na sussusissanti// na sotaṃ odahissanti// na aññācittaṃ upaṭṭhāpessanti// na ca te dhamme uggahetabbam pariyāpūṇitabbam maññissanti// Ye pana te suttantā kavikatā kāveyyā cittakkharā cittavyañjanā bāhirakā sāvakabhāsītā// tesu bhaññamānesu sussusissanti sotaṃ odahissanti// aññācittaṃ upaṭṭhāpessanti// te dhamme uggahetabbam pariyāpūṇitabbam//*

a realm of human sensual experience which has to be carefully guarded. The danger here is twofold. On the one hand, *kāvya* elicits human sensual feeling of the mendicants who are supposed to feel disgusted with this world. Also, with its irresistible appeal to the senses, composition and recitation of *kāvya* entails a grave menace to ascetic value of the Saṃgha. Indeed, if *kāvya* as a popular literature already started during the Buddha's time, the message that the Buddha conveyed is prophetic as we shall see. After all, ascetic culture is fundamentally incompatible with aesthetic value of *kāvya*.

When the Buddha condemned the poetic production of his contemporaries, he considered this to be a vile occupation which has to be abandoned before one joins the Saṃgha. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, *kāvya* as a literary cultural production was popular at the time of the Buddha. The profession of kavi at that time had much to do with rhapsodist tradition as it is said in the Theragāthā:

Drunk with skill of composing poetry, formally we wandered from
village to village, from city to city. ⁵ (Thag, 1253; trans. by Norman)

Clearly, the *kāvya* here is part of oral culture in the beginning. It became literary culture very late. The age of Buddhism was also a period when nāsikas predominated, and everything was under the sway of Prākṛit culture. Warder considered *kāvya*, by using the Māgadhī language as the medium, started as the popular secular literature in Eastern India. (Warder, 1990: 22) However, as different Prākṛits were used by various rhapsodist traditions, it is more likely that Magadhi was one of the languages used by the rhapsodists. Sanskrit most likely was not used by the poets in the early history of Indian *kāvya*.

2.

Truly, as Sanskrit *kāvya*, the *Buddhacarita* and the *Saundarananda* by Aśvaghōṣa raise a thorny issue for the history of Indian Buddhism, namely, the change of ascetic culture in Buddhism. With the creation of *kāvya*, the early ascetic religious discourse is assorted with aesthetic taste. Two original irreconcilable elements combine to begin a new phase in Buddhism. One may argue here that sensuality is not renounced outright but employed to make

⁵ *Kāveyyamattā vicariṃha pubbe, gāmā gāmaṃ purā purāṃ.*

possible the higher purpose of liberation. (Saun 18:64) Buddhism is no longer an unreservedly otherworldly religion and this world is conceived as a tough trial in which human emotional attachment becomes the arch symbol. Emotion is depicted in detail as if this world is connected with otherworldly pursuit through emotional channel.

Also, the making use of written literary genre in Sanskrit to depict the teachings of the Buddha is something new. *Kāvya* is not only utterly this-worldly, aesthetically and sensuously orientated, but has much to do with the revival of Hindu Sanskrit culture. (cf. Hilterbeitel, 2006) How could Buddhist mendicants like Aśvaghoṣa choose the writing of *kāvya* to represent Buddhism truthfully?

A more fundamental question: why did Sanskrit *kāvya* start with Buddhism? As explicated by Jamison that the term *kāvya* appears in Middle Indic but not in Sanskrit before Aśvaghoṣa used the term in a definitive sense. (Jamison, 2007:142) She said:

Now although it seems odd from the point of view of the later history of Sanskrit literature that both the word *kāvya* in its technical literary sense and a distinct *kāvya* style should both emerge in Sanskrit under the auspices of this first-century Buddhist poet [Aśvaghoṣa], it is less surprising when we consider their immediate antecedents. As it turns out, it is only Sanskrit that lacks the term *kāvya* in this crucial period; it has been lurking in Middle Indic all along, and it is likely that the word and the practice re-entered Sanskrit literature from there. (Jamison, 2007:142)

The relationship between *kāvya* and royal praise (*praśasti*) alluded above is helpful for us to understand why the *Buddhacarita* is entitled as 《佛所行讚》 in Chinese translation. (T 4: 1-54) *Praśasti* (讚) is a royal eulogy using *kāvya* in inscription. The first *praśasti*--the Rudradāman inscription witnessed this fact. (cf. Pollock, 2006:151-152; Salomon, 1998: 89) It is unquestionably a literary creation of a royal poet. The poet becomes a panegyrist or eulogist. This kind of literary production surely has much to do with panegyric or eulogy which could be translated as 「讚」 in Chinese. However, the close connection between kavi and *praśasti* goes back to the time of the Rigveda as Jamison points out:

And this word [praśasti] will provide us with a concrete link to our Rigvedic poet, for the word *praśasti* is well attested in the Rig Veda (over

30x), and it has some important associations both with the kavis and with kings in that text. The word is generally used of praise given to gods, as is the corresponding verbal lexeme (*pra-śams*). This is hardly surprising, since gods are almost the only objects of praise in the Rig Veda. However, in one unclear passage (1.122.11) it may be used of mortal royal patrons in a *dānastuti*. Moreover, sometimes the gods are praised in their roles as kings, as in VII.6.1 *prá samrājo ásurasya práśastim, puṃsáh kṛṣṭínām anumādyasya* "I (speak) forth *praśasti* of the sovereign king (and) lord [= Agni], of the man to be celebrated by the peoples". (Jamison, 2007, 146-147)

If the connection between *kavi* and *praśasti* is indispensable since the time of the Rigveda, then the correlation between *kāvya* and *praśasti* in the later period is not surprising. When Aśvaghōṣa decided to write the *Buddhacarita* and the *Saundarananda* in Sanskrit he perhaps had both in his mind: using *kāvya* to praise (*pra-śams*) great deeds of the Buddha and the lasting value of Buddhist teachings. Interestingly, the person to be praised is not a worldly king but an otherworldly victor (*jina*). Thus, it is an unusual combination of using this-worldly literary means to extol an extraordinary other-worldly achievement.

Furthermore, loud extolment of King Śuddhodana (a *praśasti* !) can be seen from the various descriptions in the *Buddhacarita* and the *Saundarananda*. This is very different from the early Buddhist account of the Cakkavattin and akin to the images of the ideal king in the Hindu epics. It is a well-known fact that kingship in early Buddhism is subordinate to the religious order in the Suttas. The king who has temporal but not spiritual power has to seek judicious advice from the Saṃgha. World-renouncer gives king valuable guidance because of their respected position and spiritual achievement. In fact, dhamma is the sovereign law that a Cakkavattin has to abide faithfully by one's capacity:

"'But what, sire, is the duty of an Ariyan wheel-turning monarch?' 'It is this, my son: Yourself depending on the Dhamma, honoring it, revering, cherishing it, doing homage to it and venerating it, having the Dhamma as your badge and banner, acknowledging the Dhamma as your master, you should establish guard, ward and protection according to Dhamma for your own household, your troops, your nobles and vassals, for Brahmins and householders, town and country folk, ascetics and

Brahmins, for beasts and birds. Let no crime [adhamma] prevail in your kingdom. “⁶ (DN, 3: 61; translated by Walshe)

If the dhamma is the supreme guiding principle to be followed by a king, then personal distinguishing characteristics of a king is often hidden behind the dhamma. In Hindu epics and Aśvaghoṣa’s kāvyas, although dhamma as an abstract principle is still upheld as the ultimate reference point, the hidden personality of the king is unveiled. Powerful charisma of a king is vital in the narrative of the epics. One may wonder if this may have something to do with the flattering description of a king’s heroic deeds in the praśastis. More important, one finds a strong link between Aśvaghoṣa’s kāvyas and Hindu epics in terms of the portrayal of the royal splendor. Both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* must have exerted a considerable influence on Aśvaghoṣa in his depiction of the moral character of a sovereign. In the *Buddhacarita*, Aśvaghoṣa said: “Sarasvata promulgated again the lost Vedas, which people in former times had not seen, and Vyāsa rendered it in many sections.” (*sārasvataścāpi jagāda naṣṭaṃ vedam punar yaṃ dadṛśur na pūrve/ vyāsastathainaṃ buhadhā cakāra*. 1:42 a-c) and “Vālmīki was the first one to produce the verses.” (*vālmīkir ādau ca sasarja padyam*. 1:43 a) That Aśvaghoṣa’s description of King Śuddhodana is in emulation of the examples from two Hindu Epics concerning the heroic narrative is inadvertently revealed here.

In his *Saundarananda*, Aśvaghoṣa uses almost the whole second canto (2: 1-45) to give an elaborate, florid and detailed account of King Śuddhodana’s personality as an exemplified dharmarāja. This is very different from the depiction of Cakkavattin Daḷhanemi in the Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda Sutta of DN above. As the ideal just or rightful king (*dhammiko dhamma-rājā*) is still not brought into being and the importance of the kingship is eclipsed by the primary concern of dhamma, Saṃgha and the Buddha. It is in the Hindu epics and the dharmasāstras that the essential characteristics of the king’s personality and rājadharma are richly described. In fact, Aśvaghoṣa’s representation of King Śuddhodana in his two kāvyas is broadly comparable to what is portrayed in the Hindu Epics. For example:

⁶ *Katamaṃ pan’etaṃ deva ariyaṃ cakkavatti-vattan ti? “Tena hi toaṃ tāta dhammaṃ yeva nissāya dhammaṃ sakkaronto dhammaṃ garukaronto dhammaṃ mānento dhammaṃ pūjento dhammaṃ apacāyamanāno dhammaddhajo dahmma-ketu dhammādhipateyyo dhammikaṃ rakkhāvaraṇa-guttiṃ saṃvidahassu anto-janasmiṃ bala-kāyasmiṃ khattiyesu anuyuttesu brāhmaṇa-gahapatikesu negama-jānapadesu Samaṇa-Brāhmaṇesu miḡa-oakkhīsu. Mā ca te tāta vijite adhamma-kāro pavattittha.”*

But the king, for the sake of his son's prosperity and spurred on by the goal of predicted for him, abode in holy place, desisted from sin, practiced self-restraint and rewarded the good.

He did not, like one wanting in self-control, indulge in the pleasures of the senses, he cherished no improper passion for women, with firmness he overcame the rebellious horses of the senses, and conquered his kinsmen and subjects by his virtues.

He did not learn sciences to cause suffering to others, but studied only the knowledge that was beneficent; for he wished well to all people as much as to his won subjects.

And for the long life of his son he worshipped the shining constellation, whose regent is Bṛhaspati, and he offered oblations in a huge fire and presented the twice-born with gold and cattle.

He bathed to purify his body with the waters of the sacred bathing-places and his mind with the waters of the virtues, and at the same time he drank *soma* as enjoined by the Vedas and observed in his heart the self-produced bliss of religious tranquility.

He spoke what was pleasant and not unprofitable; he stated what was true and not disagreeable, for self-respect made him unable to say even to himself a pleasant falsehood or a harsh truth.

He gave no opening to feelings of partiality or the reverse, according as he liked or disliked in his petitioners, and observed purity of justice as being holy; for he did not esteem sacrifice to be so in the same degree.

He ever quenched straightway with the water of gifts the thirst of expectant suppliants, and with the battle-axe of good conduct, instead of by fighting, he broke down the swollen pride of his foes. (Buddha. 2: 33-40; translated by Johnston) ⁷

⁷ *nṛpas tu tasyaiva vivṛddhihetos tadbhāvinārthena ca codyamānaḥ/
śame 'bhireme virarāma pāpād bheje damaṃ saṃvibabhāja sādhuṃ //
nādhīraavat kāmasukhe sasañje na saṃrarañje viśamaṃ jananyām/
dhr̥tyendriyāśvāṃś capalān vijigye bandhūṃś ca paurāṃś ca guṇair jigāya //
nādhyaiṣṭa duḥkhāya parasya vidyāṃ jñānaṃ śivaṃ yat tu tad adhyaiṣṭa/
svābhyaḥ prajābhyo hi yathā tathaiva sarvaprājābhyāḥ śivam āśaśaṃse //
bhaṃ bhāsuraṃ cāṅgirasādhidevaṃ yathāvad ānarca tadāyuṣe saḥ/*

The above passages run closely parallel to the description of King Śaṃtanu in the *Mahābhārata*:

King was he equal to the king of the Gods, who knew the law, upright, true to his word. The greatest fortune visited him as he sought Law and generosity and austerity. No passion or hatred did he foster; his aspect was benign as the moon's, in heat he emulated the sun, in speed the force of the wind; in his wrath he matched Death, in forbearance the earth. Neither cattle nor boar, deer nor fowl suffered useless death, king, when Śaṃtanu lorded the earth. The kingdom was ruled by brahminism and Law, while that fair-spirited Śaṃtanu impartially ruled the creatures without lust or passion. That was the time when rites were performed in worship of Gods, seers, and ancestors, and no unlawful death befell any breathing creature. Of the hapless and the friendless, and of all that were born from beast, the king was the father. While that overlord of kings of kings, that greatest of the Princes of the Kurus ruled, speech was wedded to truth, thought to Law and giving. ⁸(1, 94: 11-17; translated by van Buitenen)

*juhāva havyāny akṛṣe kṛṣānau dadau dvijebhyaḥ kṛṣānaṃ ca gās ca //
sasnau śārīraṃ pavituṃ manaś ca tīrthāmbubhiś caiva guṇāmbubhiś ca/
vedopadiṣṭaṃ samam ātmajaṃ ca somaṃ papau śāntisukhaṃ ca hārdam //
sāntvaṃ babhāse na ca nārthavad yaj jajalpa tattvaṃ na ca vipriyaṃ yat/
sāntvaṃ hy atattvaṃ paruṣaṃ ca tattvaṃ hriyāśakan nātmana eva vaktum //
iṣṭeṣv anīṣṭeṣu ca kāryavatsu na rāgadoṣāśrayatām prapede/
śivaṃ siṣeve vyavahārasuddhaṃ yajñāṃ hi mene na tathā yathā tat//
āśāvate cābhigatāya sadyo deyāmbubhis tarṣam acechidiṣṭa /
yuddhād ṛte vṛttaparaśvadhena dviḍdarpaṃ udvṛttam abebhidiṣṭa //*

⁸ *sa devarājasadr̥ṣo dharmajñāḥ satyavāg ṛjuḥ/
dānadharmatapo yogāc chriyā paramayā yutaḥ//
arāgadveśasaṃyuktaḥ somavat priyadarśanaḥ/
tejasā sūryasaṃkāśo vāyuvegasamo jave/
antakapratimaḥ kope kṣamayā pṛthivīsamaḥ//
vadhāḥ paśuvarāhāṇāṃ tathāiva mṛgapakṣiṇām/
śaṃtanau pṛthivīpāle nāvartata vṛthā nṛpaḥ//
dharmabrahmottare rājye śaṃtanur vinayātmaṃvān/
samaṃ śasāsa bhūtāni kāmarāgavivarjitaḥ//
devarṣipitṛyajñārtham ārabhyanta tadā kriyāḥ/
na cādharmaṇa keśāṃ cit prāṇinām abhavad vadhāḥ//
asukhānām anāthānām tiryagyonīṣu vartatām/
sa eva rājā bhūtānām sarveśāṃ abhavad pitā//
tasmin kurupatiśreṣṭhe rājarājeśvare sati/
śritā vāg abhavad satyaṃ dānadharmāśritaṃ manaḥ//*

In her dissertation on the *Saundarananda*, Dang gives a detailed comparison between Śaṃtanu, Śuddhodana and Dilipa of the *Raghuvamśa*. (Dang, 2011: 20-29) She also points out that these

From the illustration above, it is clear that Aśvaghōṣa's Śuddhodana has become an exemplified kṣatriya, a warrior caste in the proper sense of the term. He is no longer an upholder of universal dharma but a Hindu dharmarāja who reveres Hindu śruti and deities. He also offers fire sacrifice for the desired, selfish purpose. Indeed, the dharma that king bears in mind is what enjoined by the Vedas (*vedaś c'āmnāyi satataṃ vedokto dharma eva ca*, Saun: 2: 44 cd) not the Buddha. This shows the ultimate triumph of Hinduism. Thus, it is not surprising for us to find the distinguishing features of Śuddhodana in the *Buddhacarita* and the *Saundarananda* fully correspond to what are illustrated in the Dharmaśāstras concerning the ideal kingship. (Cf. Dang, 2011: 29-33) The Buddhist Cakkavattin as explicated in the Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta is domesticated by the Hindu dharmarāja.

Likewise, reading from the Aggañña-Sutta of DN, we find that the first king in human society is through general election. He is the one "agreed by the majority" (*mahājanena sammato*) and is in charge of the affairs of "stealing, accusation, lying and punishment." (*adinnādānaṃ garahā, musa-vado, daṇḍadānaṃ*. DN 3: 93) Also, only when society degenerated did we need a person with fair-complexion and ability to be in charge of the practical affairs of social justice to prevent the wicked things (*pāpakā dhammā*) from taking place. In this context, kingship was introduced as an unfortunate necessity rather than intrinsically good since it emerges only at the time of human deterioration. Consequently, kingship as an institution of expediency is the result of a give-and-take compact.

Nonetheless, in both the *Buddhacarita* and the *Saundarananda*, the king occupies the vital position of sustaining the prosperity of his kingdom and the welfare of his people. Sometimes he even becomes an ascetic in terms of his power of self-restraint and vow-abiding. As king of the Śākya, King Śuddhodana is compared to Indra with his rare qualities (*asulabhair guṇaiḥ*). (Saun, 2: 45) The king is no longer a shadowy figure burdened with the universal dharma but a person of great kṣatriya embodied who stands out conspicuously on earth. Here, it is Brahmana, not the Buddha, who appear to have exerted their influence behind the scenes.

depictions are closely related to the ideal dharmarāja in the *Manusmṛti*. (Dang, 2011: 29-31) Her exposition aptly illustrates the Buddhist adoption of the Hindu ideal kingship when Aśvaghōṣa wrote his kāvyas.

Conclusion

With the introduction of kāvya to Buddhism, the original otherworldly climate has undergone extraordinary change. Buddhism has to deal this world more serious than before as this world is no longer a symbol of sheer impurity. It has become an important place for the growth of a future savior. Worldly pleasure is not to be rejected indiscriminately but a tough test for a Bodhisattva to undergo as it is said in the last verse of the second canto of the *Buddhacarita*:

But all the Bodhisattvas, those beings of incomparable natures, first tasted the flavour of worldly pleasures and then when a son born to them, left for the forest. Hence, though the motive cause was fully developed in him by the accumulation of the past acts, he enjoyed sensual pleasure till he reached Illumination. ⁹ (Buddha, 2:56; translated by Johnston)

The beginning of kāvya in Buddhism also carries strong political overtones. When Aśvaghōṣa wrote the *Buddhacarita* and the *Saundarananda*, he tried to fashion an ideal king according to Hindu caste model so that it would attract support from Hindu side. If the listeners of his kāvyas are mainly from the royal court, then his mission is unmistakable: to seek sponsorship of the king so that the teachings of the Buddha (*sāsana*) could enjoy wide dissemination among the people. At this critical moment, the Buddhist had to compete actively with the Hindu for the best safeguard of the Dharma and the Saṃgha.

Abbreviations

AN = Aṅguttara Nikāya (《增支部》)

Buddha = Buddhacarita (《佛所行讚》)

DN = Dīgha Nikāya (《長部》)

Saun = Saundarananda (《美難陀傳》)

SN = Saṃyutta Nikāya (《相應部》)

T = Taishō shinshū daizōkyō (《大正新修大藏經》)

Thag = Theragātā (《長老偈》)

⁹ *vanam anupamasattvā bodhisattvāstu sarve
viśayasukharasajñā jagmur utpannaputrāḥ/
ata upacitakarmā rūḍhamūle'pi hetau
ratim upasiṣeve bodhimāpan na yāvāt //*

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Why Kāvya Started with Buddhism--The *Therīgāthā* as an Example

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Introduction

This essay investigates the extraordinary development of *kāvya* in India from the perspective of Buddhist intellectual history. It has to be pointed out that *kāvya* as a literary genre has an immediate Buddhist connection because the first Sanskrit *kāvya*s, the *Buddhacarita* and the *Śaundarananda* were written by Aśvaghoṣa- a Buddhist monk lived in the first or second century AD. In this paper I shall go further back in time and argue that although the beginning of *kāvya* in India as a secular poetic tradition is a non-Brahmanical literary creation composed in Prakrit, the Samgha receives a literary legacy from it. *Kāvya* as a style of versification is systematically employed by the Buddhist in the *Therīgāthā* to display the superiority of the *buddhavaṇana*. That is to say, the idea of *kāya* (body) as a symbol of impermanence in early Buddhism provides the point of departure for the mendicant to contrive poetic devices of comparison and contrast, exemplifying Buddhism as a remarkable religion full of profound truth of world renunciation.

1.

Buddhism was first developed in an intellectual environment where ascetic values were commonly shared by various non-Brahmanical religious traditions. World renunciation is the sure way of salvation and asceticism becomes a general orientation. The renunciation of worldly connection was fostered by various heterodox schools and Buddhism was one of them.

As a contributor of new intellectual and religious movements, Buddhism takes a critical attitude towards secular cultural activities. Among others, secular literary and entertaining activities devoid of religious value are emphatically condemned. Consequently, dramatic and musical entertainments which will distract a mendicant's mind from his/her religious endeavor are strongly censured by the Buddha as it is said:

Whereas some Samaṇas and Brahmans, while feeding on food given by

the faithful, are subject to visiting shows such as dancing, singing, music, displays, recitations, hand-music...fairy scenes... Samaṇa Gotama refrains from visiting such shows.¹ (DN, 1: 6)

These entertainments arouse an audience to audio-visual delight and pleasure. But ascetic life requires a religious commitment and inner restraint. An ascetic should have no interest in enjoyable entertainment at all and the religious life should be free from distractions. If constantly distracted by secular literary and entertaining activities, a mendicant would deviate noticeably from monasticism. In passing, let me point out that *Akkhāna* means a recitation (Cone, 2001:6) but it could well be a recitation of poetry. In general, artistic and cultural activities which have nothing to do with religious life are rejected as unwholesome in early Buddhism. Lienhard said:

Le bouddhisme primitif était, au moins en ce qui concerne l'Ordre, hostile aux arts et aux sciences, car l'opinion (vraisemblablement partagée dans les milieux *yoga* en general) était que l'art égare l'esprit et mène à une apostasie du *śīla*. La danse, le chant, la musique, les représentations théâtrales, les récitations (de poésie) et la poésie elle-même--tout cela était tenu pour aussi nuisible et corrupteur que la vie dans le luxe, que les jongleries, les jeux et autres divertissements vulgaires." (Lienhard, 1975: 376, n. 2 = 2007: 57, n.2)

Indeed, composing *kāvya* as one's profession is relegated by the Buddha as a practice related to knowledge of fortune-teller or foretelling such as palmistry and other prognostications from the marks on the body. Like making ominous or ill-omened prediction, what is proclaimed by those professions is not factual or true knowledge. Poetic imagination is one of them. It is a pure literary fantasy without validity. These improper practices are condemned as low arts or pseudo-knowledge (*tiracchāna-vijjā*). To live by *kāvya* and other occupations related to fortune-teller are denounced by the Buddha as wrong living (*micchājīva*) as it is said:

Whereas some Samaṇas and Brahmanas, while feeding on food given by the faithful, make their living by wrong means of livelihood, by low arts, such as predicting good rainfall or drought; a good harvest or famine; wellbeing, danger; illness, health; counting on the fingers, art of counting, calculating, *poetic composition*, *lokāyata* (philosophy), the ascetic Gotama

¹ *Yathā va pan' eke bhonto samaṇa-brāhmaṇā saddhā-deyyāni bhojanāni bhunṅjitvā te evarūpam visūka-dassanaṃ anuyuttā viharanti--seyyathidaṃ naccaṃ gītaṃ vāḍitaṃ pekkhaṃ akkhānaṃ pānissaraṃ...Sobha-nararakaṃ...iti vā iti evarūpā visūka-dassanā paṭivirato Samaṇo Gotamo ti.*

refrains from such low arts and wrong means of livelihood. ² (DN, 1: 11; italics mine)

It is interesting to note here that *kāvya* (*kāveyya* = *kabba*, *kabya* or *kavya* in Pāli) is listed with *lokāyata* as low arts and wrong means of livelihood. This is a very severe reprimand. It needs to be reminded here that among the religious teachers contemporary with the Buddha, the materialistic pursuit of *lokovādin* is the most prominent feature in the intellectual arena. These *lokāyatikas* deny retribution of human action (*kamma*) and ridicule worldly ethical conduct (no *kiriya* and *virīya*) and relativize the good and evil. Audaciously, they carry their logic to its utmost extremity and proclaim their hair-bristling theories which combine humans' inability to act with their "possibility" of indulging themselves. They can be seen as true religio-ethical nihilists at the time of the Buddha.

Lokāyata is also a religious movement which dealt a serious blow to the orthodoxy of Brahmanical Weltanschauung. In the *Brahmajāla Sutta's* portrayal, the *Lokāyatikas* are not interested in Upaniṣadic *ātmán* and *brāhman*, but in *attan* and *loka*; that is, the self and the world as objects of phenomenal speculation rather than noumenonal contemplation. In this new dyad of *attan* and *loka*, not only is *brāhman* replaced by *loka*, but the meaning of *ātmán* has also been profoundly transformed. *Ātmán* is no longer the Upaniṣadic transcendental "Self". It has become phenomenal self forever caught in the world of *samsāra*. Concomitantly, *loka* has become that very locus for transmigration, or the desolate spot where eternal *samsāra* takes place.

If *lokāyata* is the most popular philosophical circle, *kāvya* could be the most fashionable cultural production among literary circles. Unwittingly, this also bears witness to the collapse of Vedic Weltanschauung embodied in the *Ṛg Veda*. As *lokāyata* is a denial of indissoluble union of the Upaniṣadic *ātmán* and *brāhman*, *kāvya* is a cultural revolution against sacred Brahmanical poetic and liturgical tradition. The sacred hymns in the *Ṛgveda* depicting indissoluble human relationship with gods, divine realm and ordinance are replaced by the secular varied scenes of spring, sensual love, the female body and the erotic sentiment. Although sacred hymnal tradition ceased after the *Ṛgvedic* period, these hymns become authoritative sources of priestly rituals

² "Yathā va pan' eke bhonto samaṇa-brāhmaṇā saddhā-deyyāni bhojanāni bhujjivā te evarūpāya tiracchāna-vijjāya micchājīvena kappenti--seyyathūdam: Subbutthikā bhavissati, dubbutthikā bhavassati, subhikkhaṃ bhavissati, dubhikkhaṃ bhavissati, khemaṃ bhavissati, bhayaṃ bhavissati, rogo bhavissati, ārogyaṃ bhavissati, muddā, gaṇanā, saṃkhānam, kāveyyaṃ, lokāyataṃ-- iti vā iti evarūpāya tiracchāna-vijjāya micchājīvena paṭivirato Samaṇo Gotamo ti."

in the later Vedic period. They are still highly esteemed and miraculously preserved by the Brahmanas. However, *kāvya* as a secular poetic composition openly defies Brahmanical priestly cultural practice sanctified by the Ṛgveda. To conclude, the Brahmanas suffer greatly from two fronts in the post-Vedic period: Śramanas on the religious battle front and *kavi* on the poetic combat front.

Thus, the emergence of *kāvya* as a new literary inspiration is a deeply rebellious, epoch-making event in early Indian intellectual history.³ *Kāvya*, as secular poetry, resorts to emotional rather than religious experience to stir up listeners' sensual feelings. Latent religious sentiment is not to be evoked by *kāvya*. At the time of the Buddha, *kāvya* could also be flowery panegyric (*praśasti*) to flatter royalty obsequiously (to be discussed). Those who make their living by composing panegyric for the court and those who wander around the towns reciting lyric songs are probably what the Buddha reviled here. As suggested by Jamison that "poetic productions...were kavi's bread-and butter, royal encomia." (Jamison, 2007: 146) Kavi lost its prominent position as seer (*ṛṣi*) or inspired poet (*vipra*) after the Ṛgvedic era. Gradually, he became a eulogist to produce royal praise or a balladist in propagating secular literary culture.

In general, *kāvya* uses embellished literary expression to appeal emotionally and aesthetically. Its elegant phraseology could be sensational to give a sense of delight or even pleasure. In the introduction to her translation of Aśvaghoṣa's *Saundarananda*, Covill points out some principal features of *kāvya*:

Kāvya, a refined and rather fastidious type of literary Sanskrit, is marked by such features as varied poetic meters, ornate descriptive passages, numerous figurative expressions, euphonic blend of sound, and the

³ In the Ṛgveda, we have *kāvya* and *kāvya*, the first one is an action noun and the second is an adjective agent noun. While the second one is used in RV exclusively with a mythical figure, Uśanā *Kāvya* (correspond to Iranian Kauui Usan in the Avesta. Jamison, 2007: 117-123), the first one refers to the poetic inspiration(s) (Jamison) or prophetic word(s) (Seherwort by Geldner) of the kavi as shown from the final verse of the Agni Hymn in 4.3 (*nivācanā kavāye kāvyaṇi, āśaṃsiṣam matibhīr vipra ukthaiḥ*.16 c d): The enigmas, the poetic inspirations (are) for (you) the kavi. I, the inspired poet, have pronounced (them) in composed thoughts and solemn speeches. Trans. Jamison) and other hymns related to Uśana. In the post- Ṛgvedic development, as aptly illustrated by Jamison, the Ṛgvedic meaning of *kāvya* changed but the Brahmanas still wielded enormous "political clout" in terms of discourse. (Jamison, 2007: 138-141) *Kāvya* reappeared in the Pāli text as a secular poetic composition. Apparently, the Vedic mythology was relegated to obscurity and replaced by a new literary culture in the post-Vedic age.

purposeful evocation of aesthetic delight. ⁴(Covill, 2007: 18)

What Covill explicates here is for Sanskrit kāvya, but it could apply to kāvya in Prakrit as there is a continuous development between them in terms of its distinctive features. If “the purposeful evocation of aesthetic delight” is what *kāvya* for, then this idea certainly is not appreciated in early Buddhism. *Kāvya*, using elaborate sound and rhetoric and other poetic devices as a splendidly embellished literary expression is strongly disparaged in the Pāli canon:

In just the same way, O monks, in the future time there will be monks who won't wish to listen when those suttantas spoken by the Tathāgata-- profound, profound in meaning, otherworldly, connected with Nibbāna (or relating with emptiness literally)--are recited. They won't lend ear, won't aspire to perfect knowledge, (and) won't consider these teachings worth acquiring and mastering. But they will wish to listen when those suttantas made by kavis-- the kāvyas, embellished in sound, embellished in rhetoric, the work of non-Buddhists, spoken by śrāvakas-- are recited. They will lend ear and aspire to perfect knowledge. They will consider these teachings worth grasping and mastering. ⁵(AN, 2: 72-73 =3:107, SN, 2:267)

The Buddha here makes a dramatic contrast between suttantas of the Buddha and of kāvyas. Suttanta of the Buddha, as the embodiment of dhamma, is profound and meaningful. This is what a mendicant should listen attentively. S/he should avoid listening *kāvya*-recitation because of its emotive and seductive power. *Kāvya*s declaimed by the heretics is radically different from Sūtras well-spoken by the Tathāgata. While the dharma preached by the Buddha is other-worldly and closely related to the final emancipation, the *kāvya*s spoken by lay people is worldly and inextricably connected with same sensual attachment. Bāhiraka here could also mean non-religious as kāvya is a

⁴ Cf. also what is argued by Pollock: “From the first, *kāvya* was... this worldly (*laukika*) in its themes, even when these concerned the divine...it was directed above all toward investigating the elementary forms of human emotional experience; at the same time (and for the same reason) it was centrally concerned with the nature of language itself, with its primary phonic and semantic capacities.”(Pollock, 2006:13; underlines mine) To be sure, kāvya in Prakrit is different from Sanskrit mahākāvya in terms of literary sophistication, but the elaborate devices in sound and meaning to produce aesthetic effect are commonly shared by the kavis of both periods.

⁵ *Evaṃ eva kho bhikkhave bhavissanti bhikkhū anāgatam addhānaṃ// Ye te suttantā tathāgatabhāsītā gambhīrā gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatapaṭisaṃyuttā// tesu bhaññamānesu na sussusissanti// na sotaṃ odahissanti// na aññācittaṃ upaṭṭhāpessanti// na ca te dhamme uggahetabbam pariyāpuṇitabbaṃ maññissanti// Ye pana te suttantā kavikatā kāveyyā cittakkharā cittaṃvyañjanā bāhirakā sāvakabhāsītā// tesu bhaññamānesu sussusissanti sotaṃ odahissanti// aññācittaṃ upaṭṭhāpessanti// te dhamme uggahetabbam pariyāpuṇitabbaṃ maññissanti//*

secular literary production. Most important, the Buddha was very critical about making use of *citra* (rhetorical embellishments) in propagating dharma as also shown from the Vinaya:

The Buddha said: “My dharma does not attach importance to high-flown language. The point is to make people understand [of it] even if [the language] is simply.⁶

Kāvya, either in Prakrit or in classical Sanskrit, is a literary device aiming at linguistic and stylish adornment. *Citta* (Sanskrit:*citra*) is a use of refined language to render simply language belles-lettres. In fact, kāvya as composed with “embellished in sound, embellished in rhetoric” is against the language policy of the Buddha. In Buddhism, *citta* as a representation of things flowery yet barren is a critique not only of popular culture embodied in kāvya, but also of beautiful form (*rūpa*) or outward appearance (*varṇa*) embodied in the young female body. Impermanence of the body is what behind a comely youth. *Citta* in the compounds *cittakkharā cittavyañjanā* is related to figurative language in poetry. However, from the context of early Buddhism, *citta* has much to do with the human body doomed to perish from the start. There is a definite correlation between *kāya* and *kāvya* in terms of the metaphor of *citta*, as shown from the following passages:

Passa cittakataṃ bimbam arukāyaṃ samussitaṃ

āturaṃ bahusamkappaṃ yassa n’ atthi dhuvam ṭhiti.

passa cittakataṃ rūpaṃ mañinā kuṇḍalena ca

aṭṭhitacena onaddhaṃ saha vatthehi sobhati.

alattakakatā pādā mukhaṃ cuṇṇakamakkhitaṃ

alaṃ bālassa mohāya no ca pārāgavesino.

aṭṭhapādakatā kesā nettā añjana makkhitā

alaṃ bālassa mohāya no ca pārāgavesino.

añjanī ‘va navā citta pūtikāyo alaṅkato

⁶佛言：「吾法中不貴浮華之言語，雖質樸不失其義，令人受解為要。」《毗尼母經》(Vinayamātrkā, sect unknown) vol.4. T.24: 846a.

alaṃ bālassa mohāya no ca pāragavesino.

odahī migavo pāsam; nāsadā vākaraṃ migo;

bhutvā nivāpaṃ gacchāma kandante migabandhake ti. (Thag. vs 769-774 = MN 2: 64-65)

Behold this painted puppet, a mass of sores, compounded, diseased, with many intensions, for which there is neither permanence nor stability.

Behold this painted form, with jewelry and ear-rings; covered with skin and bones, it looks splendid with clothes.

The feet are adorned with lac, the face is smeared with powder, enough to deceive a fool, but not for one who looks for the other shore.

Hair plaited eightfold, eyes smeared with pigment, enough to deceive a fool, but not for one who looks for the other shore.

A foul body adorned like a new box for ointment, enough to deceive a fool, but not for one who looks for the other shore.

The deer-hunter set a snare, the deer did not approach the snare; we ate the bait and go away now while the hunters lament.

It is interesting to note that what is depicted above concerning the body holds true for *kāvya*. In Buddhism, all living things are subject to decomposition and the body as a symbol is compared to a living corpse filthy with accumulated dirt. Clad with shining clothes, the body is wrapped up in skin and bones. Likewise, *kāveyyā* as *kavikata* is also a *cittakata*, variegated and attractive outwards yet corrupt and subject to decay inwards. Evidently, the body though well-adorned like a new painted unguent pot, is foul with impurities. Likewise, *kāvya* is a composed painted image full of ornate decorations yet without spiritual worth. It has to be pointed out that *kāvya* as a literary genre cannot do justice to itself without *alaṃkata*.

Nonetheless, even glittering with flowery language, it is simply an emblem of secular literary culture devoid of any religious profundity. While the fool is easily ensnared by evanescent physical beauty, a wise mendicant should not be trapped in the snare set by the Māra. *Kāvya* is also a noose set by the kavi to trap mendicant. However, a *religieux* ought to be devoted oneself solely to religious pursuits without distractions. Secular literary pursuits of the mendicant are not only efforts in vain but will

endanger the very existence of the Saṃgha and dhamma. Like the meditation on the impermanence of the body, the saṃgha has to guard carefully against the encroachment of kāvya on mendicant's life.

The reason why the Buddha gravely admonishes monks about the dangers of *kāvya* is clear. They are works of non-Buddhists with this-worldly emotional attachments. *Kāvya* has much to do with depiction and investigation of human emotional experience (*vedanā*: feeling, sensation). In early Buddhism, *vedanā* is a realm of human sensual feelings to be carefully guarded. The danger here is twofold. On the one hand, *kāvya* elicits human sensual feeling of the mendicants who are supposed to feel disgusted with this world. Also, with its irresistible appeal to the senses, composition and recitation of *kāvya* entails a grave menace to ascetic value of the Saṃgha. Indeed, if *kāvya* as a literary tradition already flourished during the Buddha's time, the message that the Buddha conveyed is strong and forceful. After all, ascetic culture is fundamentally incompatible with aesthetic value of *kāvya*.

As a cultural movement and literary innovation, the rising of *kāvya* is an open rebellion against the Vedic Brahmanical Sanskrit tradition. Hand in hand with the Śramanical front, *kavi* starts to compose secular poetry in Prakrit which leaves the Vedic Sanskrit behind. The post-Vedic intellectual scene in ancient India is a great triumph of non-Brahmanical heterodoxy. Intellectual activities such as the composition of *kāvya* and dissemination of dhamma in various dialects point to the surfacing of a new culture different from the earlier Vedic priestly conservatism. The ascendancy of this new culture, either in the realm of religion or that of secular literature, puts an end to the Brahmanical hegemony. Lienhard suggests:

The poetic parts of the Pāli version of the Buddhist canon date from about 500-100 B.C. As we can see...poetic form is clearly already moving along the same lines as *kāvya*. It is not only the choice of certain definite (literary) imagery and attributes that is typical; the language is searching for new means of expression, using for instance special words from the vocabulary of poetry, experimenting with new metres or fitting into the stanza long compound words which are chosen mainly for their euphonic qualities. The break with the Vedic-Sanskrit tradition seems therefore to have taken place much earlier than has generally been supposed. It is probable that the factors which triggered off this shift in the system of poetic rules did not come from Sanskrit sources, which for some time remained strictly Brahmanical and conservative. *The majority*

of the new impulses came rather from those sections of society that employed Middle Indian language as a cultural medium, sections which, even in the first century after the death of Gautama Buddha (about 480 B.C.), were the bearers of a mainly secular poetic art that was partly urban, partly courtly. (Lienhard, 1984: 78-79; italics mine)

Clearly, *kāvya* as a cultural movement did not, as argued by Pollock, start in the early centuries of the Christian era (Pollock, 2006). Accordingly, it is also not in the Age of Sanskrit Cosmopolis ⁷ that *kāvya* ascended to cultural power. As a secular literary production, *kāvya* already thrived vigorously in the post-Vedic period. However, it is composed not in Sanskrit, but in Prakrit. This unmistakably shows that Sanskrit *kāvya* arrived much later in Indian literary history and it is definitely not Brahmanas, but avant-garde non-believer who first launched upon the experiment of this literary genre. To be sure, the age of the Buddha bears witness not only the prevalence of Śramanism over Brahmanism but *kāveyya* over *sūktā* ◦

2.

When the Buddha condemned the poetic production of his contemporaries, he considered *kavi* to be a vile occupation. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, *kāvya* as a cultural making was probably prominent and fashionable in literary circles at the time of the Buddha. The profession of *kavi* at that time had its bard connection too as it is said in the *Theragāthā*:

Intoxicated with poetic composition, previously we wandered from village to village, from town to town. Then we saw the enlightened one who reached perfection in all dhammas. ⁸ (Thag, 1253)

Thus, the poet of the Buddha's age can be roughly divided into two types: court poet and wandering bard. (cf. Lienhard, 1984:53-55) Since the age of Buddha was also a period when Śramanism predominated, everything was under the sway of Prakrit culture.⁹ Thus, Warder considers *kāvya*, by using

⁷ This is an idea put forth by Pollock to designate Sanskrit as the embodiment of political-cultural power : “Only slowly, and reluctantly, it appears, did Sanskrit emerge as a public political language...from the sacerdotal environment in which it was most at home. It emerges dramatically as such a language in the polities of the subcontinent after the beginning of the common era, something that happens almost simultaneously in Southeast Asia...”(Pollock, 1996:197)

⁸ *Kāveyyamattā vicariṃha pubbe gāmā gāmaṃ purā puram
ath'addasāmi sambuddham sabbadhammāna pāraguṃ.*

⁹ Both the Buddha and Mahāvīra reject Sanskrit and prefer Prakrit for the dissemination of their teachings. The Buddha asks his follower to use local languages to propagate dhamma: *anujānāmi bhikkhave sakāya niruttīyā buddhavacanaṃ pariyāpunitun ti. (Vinayapiṭaka, 2: 319)* Mahāvīra is said to preach in the Ardhamāgadhī: *savvabhāsāṇugamaṇīe sarassaie joyaṇaṇihāriṇā sareṇaṃ*

the Māgadhī language as the medium, started as the popular secular literature in Eastern India. (Warder, 1990: 22) However, as different Prakrits were used by various rhapsodist traditions, it is more likely that Magadhi was one of the languages used by the bards. It is extremely unlikely that Sanskrit was used by the poets in the early history of Indian kāvya since it was the bearer of Brahmanical orthodoxy. Vedic Sanskrit poetic tradition embodied in the *Ṛgveda* needs to be profoundly transformed to suit the requirements of classical Sanskrit prosody. This great transform is tantamount to an intellectual revolution in Brahmanical culture which needs many centuries to carry out.

Accordingly, it is probably not a surprise that in the poems of early Buddhist nuns, the *Therīgāthā*, collected in the Pali canon are filled with a highly figurative depiction of the female body and erotic sentiment (*śṛṅgāra*) . Although they are not as sophisticated and ornate as the later classical Sanskrit kāvya that one finds in Kālidāsa's exquisite masterpieces, these poems undoubtedly belong to the lyric tradition of kāvya. They certainly point to an established tradition of kāvya in the post-Vedic India. Unmistakably the kāvya type of the *Therīgāthā* figures very prominently in the *Therīgāthā*. It is very unlikely that the saṃgha starts kāvya as this would profoundly violate monastic rules. However, as will be shown, mendicants take up kāvya writing for religious purposes. The Buddhist's adoption of kāvya is well exemplified in the *Therīgāthā*. Few examples will suffice to show the poetic devices in terms of comparing adoring female eyes:

akkhīni ca turiyā-r-iva kinnariyā-r-iva pabbatantare/

tava me nayanāni dakkhiya bhiiyo kāmarati pavaḍḍhati//

uppalasilharopamānite vimale hāṭakasannibhe mukhe/

tava me nayanāni dakkhiya bhiiyo kāmaguṇo pavaḍḍhati//

apī dūragatā sarembhase āyatapamhe visuddhadassane/

na hi m'atthi tayā piyatarā nayanā kinnari mandalocane// (Theg 381-383)

Your eyes are just like those of a doe, like those of a nymph inside a mountain; seeing your eyes my delight in sensual pleasures increases even more.

Addhamāgahāe bhāsāe. (Anupapātika Sūtra, quoted in Dundas, 1996: 141)

Your face resembling the bud of a blue lotus, spotless like gold; seeing your eyes, my passion increases even more.

Though you have gone far away, I shall remember your long eyelashes, the spotless glances; for no eyes are dearer to me than yours, you nymph with lovely eyes.”

These are the verses that a gallant singing the praises of Bhikkhunī Subhā’s charming eyes. The figurative speech (*alamkāra*) used is simpler and less refined compared with what one finds in the Kālidāsa’s works. But the exercise of comparison or simile (*upamā*) is conspicuous. Here, we perceive an unbroken continuity between the Buddhist gāthā and the classical Sanskrit kāvya in terms of *upamānaupameyabhāva* (the connection between the thing to be compared and the object with which it is compared). The following verses depicting Pārvatī’s eyes in the *Kumārasambhava* can be a comparable example:

pravātanīlotpalanirviśeṣamadhīraviprekṣatamāyatākṣayā/

tayā grhītaṃ nu mṛgāṅganābhyastato grhītaṃ nu mṛgāṅganābhiḥ//

tasyāḥ śalalākāñjananirmiteva kāntirbhruvorāyatalekhayoryā/

tāṃ vīkṣaya līlācaturāmanaṅgaḥ svacāpasaundaryamadaṃ mumoca//

(1: 46-47)

Just like the blue lotus blowing in the wind were her long eyes with their unsteady glances, which she had either took from the does or they took from her.

As if painted by pencil with black pigment, the long lines of her eyebrows are lovely, and when he saw her sportive charming one, the God of Love laid aside his conceit in the beauty of his bow.

It is striking that the similes like “blue lotus”, “doe” are used in both cases. Also, the lasting fascination of beauty is poetically recounted although in varying ways. The libertine as the speaker in Theg surely is an embodiment of the god of love. To be sure, the technical expression in the *Kumārasambhava* is highly polished, richly expressive and wonderfully delicate. Nonetheless, it continues a poetic tradition which already started in Theg is unmistakable.

One may well wonder at the emergence of “Buddhist kāvya” as testified in

the *Therīgāthā*. This is closely related with the Buddhist theme of the impermanence (*aniccatā*) of the body. As discussed earlier, the body (*kāya*) is the assemblage of five khandhas which is fated to ruin. As a salient metaphor of impermanence in Buddhism, the body is a recurrent religious theme illustrated in both prose and verse. For the Buddha, the physical body (*sarīra*) is also the incarnation of old age (*jarā*) and death (*maccu*) which are origins of human suffering. The following verses in the *Dhammapada* aptly illustrate what the body represents in early Buddhism:

parijīṇṇaṃ idaṃ rūpaṃ rogaṇiḍḍhaṃ pabhaṅguraṃ/

bhijjati pūṭisandeho maraṇantaṃ hi jīvitam//

yāni' māni apatthāni alāpuneva sārade/

kāpotakāni aṭṭhīni tāni disvāna kā rati//

aṭṭhīnaṃ nagaraṃ kataṃ māṃsalohitalepanam

yattha jarā ca maccū ca māno makkho ca ohito//

jīrnati ve rājarathā sucittā

atho sarīraṃ pi jaram upeti /

sataṃ ca dhammo na jaram upeti

santo have sabbhi pavedaynati// (Dhammapada, 148-151)

This body is decayed, a nest of diseases and easily destroyed. The mass of corruption to be broken, indeed, having death as its end of life.

What delight is there for him who sees these with gray bones like gourds thrown away in the autumn.

A fortress is made of the bones, smearing with flesh and blood, and in it dwell old age and death, pride and hypocrisy.

The well-painted chariots of kings bring to ruin; the body also comes to old age but the dhamma of the virtuous does not age. Indeed, the virtuous people should make known to each other.

As mentioned before, from the perspective of Buddhist doctrine of impermanence, the physical beauty is an illusion. Also, the aged and death are fundamental in Buddhism as they are closely related to the inevitable decay of the body. On the other hand, the female body provides a striking

example of the Buddhist body since the difference between sexual attractiveness of a young female flesh and downright repulsiveness of an old decayed body is remarkable. Thus, using secular poetry depicting the illusiveness of the female physical beauty to bring out the Buddhist truth of the body seems a useful practice although the Buddha solemnly warned his disciples of the dangers that awaited the Saṃgha. For a Buddhist kavi, what kāvya represents is not just worldly sensual attachment but, most important, the ephemerality of the female body. As mentioned earlier, while kāvyas are literary products of the lay people, suttas are what spoken by the Buddha concerning the path of mokṣa. The mendicants surely know the risk of composing kāvya. However, it seems that kāvya becomes a disguise for them to articulate the superiority of dhamma from the very beginning as shown from the *Therīgāthā*.

In his penetrating essay on the relationship between the *Therīgāthā* and the development of kāvya, Lienhard points out that the so-called Verses of Ambāpālī (gāthās 252-270) in the *Therīgāthā* provides an outstanding example of the use of *upamā*. (Lienhard, 1979 = 2007) In this *Viśatinipāta* (selections of about twenty verses), the poet (or poetess) brings out the sharp contrast between a previous young and beautiful body and an aged and crumbling body at present. Using striking similes to depict different parts of the body in its youth and old age, the poet reiterates that decay (*jarā*) is the last stage of our transitory life and concludes that the body is feeble with age, the abode of various pains, a collapsing old house through the loss of plaster (*jajjaro bahudukkhānam ālayo/so 'apalepapatito jarāgharo*). At the end of each verse, the poet declares that only the buddhavacana is the truth, not being otherwise (*saccavādivacanaṃ anaññathā*). Take verses 256-258 as examples:

*cittakārasukatā va lekhitā sobhate su bhamukā pure mama/
tā jarāya valihi palambitā saccavādivacanaṃ anaññathā//
bhassarā surucirā yathā maṇi nettāhesuṃ abhinīla-m-āyatā/
te jarāy' abhihatā na sobhate saccavādivacanaṃ anaññathā//
saṅhatuṅgasadisī ca nāsikā sobhate su abhiyobhanaṃ paṭi/
sā jarāya upakūlitā viya saccavādivacanaṃ anaññathā//*

In the past my penciled eyebrows shone brightly as if well-painted by painters; on account of old age they hang down with wrinkles; it is the

utterance of truth-speaker, not being otherwise.

My eyes were resplendent, very beautiful like jewels, deeply black and long; struck by old age they do not shine; it is the utterance of truth-speaker, not being otherwise.

In the tender youth my nose shined like a smooth peak; on account of old age it is like being shriveled; it is the utterance of truth-speaker, not being otherwise.

To become older and aged is the truth of impermanence. We are all subject to aging. Pretty and shining damsel inevitably turns into ugly and blemished old woman. The contrast between previous beauty and present hideousness of a woman is remarkably portrayed in the poem. The poet uses *kāvya* to embellish the secularity of the beauty and the body and affirm truth of Buddhism. Lienhard effectively exemplifies how *kāvya* is adopted as an essential component in Theg from this group of verses. It seems that the Buddhist embrace of *kāvya* is a result of considerable deliberation. Lienhard's pointed illustration on "Buddhist *kāvya*" in Theg is worth quoting here:

La chanson d'Ambapālī (*Therīgāthā* 252-270) constitue un exemple lumineux de la répétition de phrases et de vers entiers. Cette chanson ouvre le *Nipāta* le plus long des *Therīgāthā*, le *Viśatinipāta*. Elle contient 19 strophes....La poétesse (ou le poète?) a mis le plus grand soin à organiser un schème qui, d'ailleurs, se retrouve dans beaucoup de *gāthā* comme principe de composition: tandis que les *pāda* 1 et 2 de chaque strophe exaltent la beauté physique de la jeune femme, le *pāda* 3 dépeint la déchéance du corps vieille, et le *pāda* 4, qui termine la strophe, se compose de refrain, qui confirme la vérité de la parole de Bouddha: *saccavādivacanam anññathā*. Cette recurrence, ce retour d'une tournure particulière, va de pair avec le fait que les deux premiers *pāda* de chaque strophe font usage de l'*upamā*, la comparaison: les yeux noirs languissants d'Ambapālī sont comparés à des pierres précieuses (257), la voix douce avec la voix du kokila (261), les cuisses avec les mouvements sinueux d'un serpent (267), etc.

La chanson d'Ambapālī trahit d'une manière évidente une conscience poétique. Cela se voit également dans l'usage de la langue de poème. Les adjectifs et autres épithètes sont très fréquents dans la première moitié, et, dans le plupart des strophes, on découvre que le premier *pāda* (et parfois aussi le deuxième) sont embellish de composés assez longs...

Le strict parallélisme des membres assure la cohésion des vers et des strophes, et contribue à la continuité de la composition. Tout ceci n'a pas jailli au hasard, au fur et à mesure de l'inspiration, bien au contraire, le poème est construit avec une conscience sûre de moyens d'expression poétique, car Ambapālī (ou l'auteur quel qu'il soit) n'a pas simplement mis les strophes à la suite les unes des autres pour offrir un texte versifié. Sa chanson constitue un oeuvre poétique, et –ce qui mérite attention– elle forme un poème complet, une pièce de vers achevée. Comme dans *kāvya* classique, Ambapālī décrit le corps féminin, mais, contrairement à la méthode dite *nakhaśikha* du *kāvya*, elle l'évoque en commençant par le tête pour terminer aux pieds. Après la description des pieds, suit une strophe que résume l'ensemble: *ediso ahu ayam samussayo* (270) «tel était ce corps autrefois» (Lienhard, 1979: 379-380 = 2007, 60-61)

Conclusion

Evidently, the adoption of *kāvya* in Buddhism has much to do with its relegation of the body to a vile position. The body, particularly the female one becomes a matter of no small concern. Oddly enough, the depiction of the female body in *kāvya* style is religiously motivated and related to an ambivalent position of the nun in early Buddhism. To be sure, the female physical body with sexual attraction is probably her most noticeable characteristic. To allow woman enter the order could put the *saṃgha* in jeopardy if not strictly regulated as the *saṃgha* is a community of *sābrahmacāriṇī* (fellow students) who practice *brahmacariya* (observance of vows of pure life, especially chastity) together. A complete abandonment of her connection with worldly life, especially sexual appeal is indispensable for a woman to become a member of the *saṃgha*. Thus, to lay bare her physical body in *kāvya* could be a literary device to show the utter futility of bodily attachment and vanity. As Buddhist *kāvya* is associated with the *Therīgāthā*, not the *Theraḡāthā*, to use secular poem to depict the female body and allied sexual appeal audaciously is to squarely address the problem of impermanence. While the female body as the representation of constant flux is powerfully depicted in *kāvya*, sacredness of the *buddhavacana* and *dhamma* could be well guarded against the work of non-Buddhists.

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科技部補助計畫衍生研發成果推廣資料表

日期:2015/08/26

科技部補助計畫	計畫名稱: 從馬鳴梵語宮廷詩看佛教梵語文化所涉及的問題(111-III)
	計畫主持人: 黃柏棋
	計畫編號: 103-2410-H-004-171- 學門領域: 宗教哲學及宗教研究
無研發成果推廣資料	

103 年度專題研究計畫研究成果彙整表

計畫主持人：黃柏棋		計畫編號：103-2410-H-004-171-					
計畫名稱：從馬鳴梵語宮廷詩看佛教梵語文化所涉及的問題(111-III)							
成果項目		量化			單位	備註（質化說明：如數個計畫共同成果、成果列為該期刊之封面故事...等）	
		實際已達成數（被接受或已發表）	預期總達成數(含實際已達成數)	本計畫實際貢獻百分比			
國內	論文著作	期刊論文	0	0	100%	篇	
		研究報告/技術報告	0	0	100%		
		研討會論文	2	2	100%		
		專書	1	1	100%		
	專利	申請中件數	0	0	100%	件	
		已獲得件數	0	0	100%		
	技術移轉	件數	0	0	100%	件	
		權利金	0	0	100%	千元	
	參與計畫人力 (本國籍)	碩士生	1	1	100%	人次	
		博士生	0	0	100%		
		博士後研究員	0	0	100%		
		專任助理	0	0	100%		
國外	論文著作	期刊論文	0	0	100%	篇	
		研究報告/技術報告	0	0	100%		
		研討會論文	1	1	100%		
		專書	0	0	100%		章/本
	專利	申請中件數	0	0	100%	件	
		已獲得件數	0	0	100%		
	技術移轉	件數	0	0	100%	件	
		權利金	0	0	100%	千元	
	參與計畫人力 (外國籍)	碩士生	0	0	100%	人次	
		博士生	0	0	100%		
		博士後研究員	0	0	100%		
		專任助理	0	0	100%		

<p style="text-align: center;">其他成果</p> <p>(無法以量化表達之成果如辦理學術活動、獲得獎項、重要國際合作、研究成果國際影響力及其他協助產業技術發展之具體效益事項等，請以文字敘述填列。)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">無</p>
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	成果項目	量化	名稱或內容性質簡述
科 教 處 計 畫 加 填 項 目	測驗工具(含質性與量性)	0	
	課程/模組	0	
	電腦及網路系統或工具	0	
	教材	0	
	舉辦之活動/競賽	0	
	研討會/工作坊	0	
	電子報、網站	0	
	計畫成果推廣之參與(閱聽)人數	0	

科技部補助專題研究計畫成果報告自評表

請就研究內容與原計畫相符程度、達成預期目標情況、研究成果之學術或應用價值（簡要敘述成果所代表之意義、價值、影響或進一步發展之可能性）、是否適合在學術期刊發表或申請專利、主要發現或其他有關價值等，作一綜合評估。

1. 請就研究內容與原計畫相符程度、達成預期目標情況作一綜合評估

達成目標

未達成目標（請說明，以 100 字為限）

實驗失敗

因故實驗中斷

其他原因

說明：

2. 研究成果在學術期刊發表或申請專利等情形：

論文： 已發表 未發表之文稿 撰寫中 無

專利： 已獲得 申請中 無

技轉： 已技轉 洽談中 無

其他：（以 100 字為限）

3. 請依學術成就、技術創新、社會影響等方面，評估研究成果之學術或應用價值（簡要敘述成果所代表之意義、價值、影響或進一步發展之可能性）（以 500 字為限）

本研究對於佛教思想的發展有其重要性，從初期佛教到大乘佛教的變化，可以從僧眾對於美文體(Kāvya)看法的轉變來印證。

初期佛教無常思想的重要性，可以由《長老尼偈》中對於女性身體的變化之敘述看出，從貌美的青春到衰敗的暮年，藉著美文體的敘述方式，讓人感到身體的不可依恃，唯有離棄世間方能獲得終極的解脫，這是初期佛教美文體的表現目的。到了後期，馬鳴以優雅的梵文書寫《佛所行讚》時，佛教跟印度教處於一種競爭的年代，這個時期印度教漸漸對佛教產生衝擊，所以馬鳴《佛所行讚》的書寫方式，受到印度教史詩《羅摩衍那》極大的影響，佛陀變成史詩的英雄，而非單純出世的聖人，這與初期佛教所關心的棄世真理有不同的表現方式。

這篇研究除了探討佛教思想的轉變，也觸及印度教跟佛教在中世印度的思想互動，對於研究佛教與印度教的學者而言有一定的參考價值。