



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Tree and serpent worship

Fergusson, James

London, 1868

Appendix C. - Translations Of The Edicts Of Asoka, And The Bhabra
Inscription, By Professor Wilson

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-62112](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-62112)

Gonanda then asks Bṛihadaśwa what "the words of Nīla" were. The sage then repeats the lesson as it was uttered by Nīla himself to the Brahmin. Here follows a long list of the principal rites and ceremonies throughout the year, beginning with the full moon of Āśwayuja; it contains some curious matter, but the Nāgas are hardly ever mentioned.

At the close, Vaiśampāyana interrupts the original dialogue by the remark that Gonanda did not obey these laws, and consequently fell at Mathurá, being slain by Balabhadra (cf. Rájat. I. 59-63).

Gonanda then asks for some account of the principal Nāgas who dwell in Kashmir. A long list of names follows, and some legends; and also a list of the principal deities worshipped there, and the benefits derived from visiting their shrines. Bṛihadaśwa then relates some legends connected with several holy places in Kashmir.

The poem winds up with a return to the original interlocutors. Janamejaya asks Vaiśampāyana to eulogize the glory of the river Vitastá, which closes the work.

APPENDIX C.

THE following translations of the rock-cut edicts of Aśoka are reproduced here without note or comment, but literally, as they have already appeared several times in print. None of those yet given to the public can be considered as either perfect or complete, but the sense can in all cases be gathered from them, and they are sufficient for our present purposes. Two other copies of these edicts have been discovered since these translations were made,—one at the foot of the Himalayas, north of Meerut, and another in Cuttack. When these are published a more perfect translation may be possible. Those who desire further information are referred to Prinsep's translation, *J. A. S. B.*, VII. p. 219. et seqq.; to Professor Wilson's *J. R. A. S.*, XII. 153, et seq.; to Burnouf, "Lotus de la Bonne Loi," Appendix, p. 659, et seqq.; and to Mrs. Speir's *Life in Ancient India*, p. 230, et seqq. The object for which they are introduced here, is neither to explain their text nor to comment on their doctrines, but to afford the reader of the previous pages a picture of Buddhism as it existed B.C. 250, in the words of its most ardent devotee and its principal promoter. This is done in order that he may compare it with Buddhism as presented 300 years afterwards in the sculptures at Sanchi; or as it appears 300 years after that time, in A.D. 350 at Amravati. This completes the means of comparison in so far as this work is concerned; but, as already mentioned, the frescoes at Ajanta afford a fourth picture 200 years more modern than Amravati; and again, 300 after that we have the Thibetan Lalita-Vistara. Unfortunately we still want, and it is feared are little likely to obtain, any contemporary record at the beginning of our series, 300 years before Aśoka, but it is satisfactory to know that materials now exist for illustrating the other five epochs of Buddhism.

TABLET I.

This is the Edict of the beloved of the Gods, the Raja Piyadasi. The putting to death of animals is to be entirely discontinued, and no convivial meeting is to be held, for the beloved of the Gods, Raja Piyadasi, remarks many faults in such assemblies. There is but one assembly, indeed, which is approved of by the Raja, * * * which is that of the great kitchen of Raja Piyadasi; every day hundreds of thousands of animals have been slaughtered for virtuous purposes, but now, although this pious Edict is proclaimed that animals may be killed for good purposes, and such is the practice, yet as the practice is not determined, these presents are proclaimed, that hereafter they shall not be killed.

TABLET II.

In all the conquered territories of the Raja Piyadasi, even unto the ends of the earth, as in Chola, in Pida (the kingdom of Satyaputra), in Keralaputra (or Malabar), and in Tambapanni (or Ceylon), and to Antiochus the Yona Raja, and to those Princes who are allied with him, it is proclaimed that two designs have been cherished by Piyadasi,—one regarding men, and one relating to animals,—that everywhere wholesome vegetables, roots, and fruit-trees shall be cultivated, and that on the roads wells shall be dug and trees planted, to give enjoyment for both men and animals.

TABLET III.

King Piyadasi says:—This was ordained by me when I had been twelve years inaugurated in the conquered country; that amongst those united in the law, whether strangers or my own subjects, quinquennial expiation shall be held for the enforcement of moral obligations, as—duty to parents, friends, children, relations, Brahmins, and Sramans. Liberality is good, non-injury of living creatures is good, abstinence from prodigality and slander is good. The Assembly itself will instruct the faithful in the virtues here enumerated, both by explanation and by example.

TABLET IV.

In past times, during many hundreds of years, there have prevailed destruction of life and the injury of living beings, want of respect for kindred, Brahmins and Sramans. But now King Piyadasi practises the Law, the drum sounds, and the Law is proclaimed by processions of cars and elephants, and displays of fireworks. That which had not been seen for centuries, is now seen * * * in consequence of King Piyadasi's commands that the Law be practised * * * And Piyadasi will cause the observance of the Law to increase; and the sons and grandsons and great-grandsons of Piyadasi will cause its observance to increase until the *Kalpa* of destruction.

TABLET V.

They (the Mahâmâtra) shall also be spread among the warriors, the Brahmins, the mendicants, the destitute, and others, without any obstruction, for the happiness of the well-disposed, in order to loosen the bonds of those who are bound, and liberate those who are confined, through the means of holy wisdom disseminated by pious teachers, and they will proceed to the outer cities and fastnesses of my brother and sister, and wherever are any other of my kindred; and the ministers of morals, those who are appointed as superintendents of morals, shall, wherever the moral law is established, give encouragement to the charitable and those addicted to virtue. With this intent this Edict is written, and let my people obey it.

TABLET VI.

Hitherto attention has not been given to reports and affairs incessantly, or at all times, and on this account I decree that at all times,—even when I take recreation in the apartments of the women and children, or in conversation, or in riding, or in gardens, in all places,—there shall be informers (*Prativedaka*) to make known to me the wishes of the people; and everywhere I will occupy myself with the welfare of the people; and whatever I declare, or whatever the Mahâmâtra shall declare, shall be referred to the Council for decision. Thus shall reports be made to me. This have I everywhere and in every place commanded, for to me there is not satisfaction in the pursuit of worldly affairs; the most worthy pursuit is the prosperity of the whole world. My whole endeavour is to be blameless towards all creatures, to make them happy here below, and enable them hereafter to attain *Swarga*. With this view this moral Edict has been written: may it long endure; and may my sons and great-grandsons after me also labour for the universal good; but this is difficult without extreme exertion.

TABLET VII.

The beloved of the Gods, the Raja Piyadasi, desires that the ascetics of all the different beliefs (the *Pāshanda*) may everywhere dwell (unmolested): they all aim at moral restraint and purity of disposition; but men have various opinions and various desires, and the ascetics obtain either all or merely a part (of what they want). However, even for him who does not obtain a large gift or alms, purity of disposition, gratitude, and steady devotion is desirable.

TABLET VIII.

In past times Kings were addicted to travelling about, to companions, to going abroad, to hunting, and similar amusements; but Piyadasi, the beloved of the Gods, having been ten years inaugurated, by him easily awakened, that moral festival is adopted (which consists) in seeing and bestowing gifts on Brahminas and Sramanas, in seeing and giving gold to Elders, and overseeing the country and the people; the institution of moral laws and the investigation of morals. Such are the devices for the removal of apprehension, and such are the different pursuits of the favourite of the Gods, King Piyadasi.

TABLET IX.

The beloved of the Gods, the Raja Piyadasi, thus says:—Every man that is, celebrates various occasions of festivity, as,—on the removal of incumbrances, on invitations, on marriages, on the birth of a son, or on setting forth on a journey,—on these and other occasions a man makes various rejoicings. Such festivals are fruitless—are vain; but the festival that bears great fruit is the festival of duty (the *dharma mangala*), such as the respect of the servant to his master; reverence for holy teachers is good; liberality to Brahmins and Sramanas is good. These and other such acts constitute verily the festival of duty, and this is to be cherished as a father by a son, or a dependant by his master; * * * for the establishment of this object virtuous donations are made, for there is no donation equal to the gift of duty; * * * benevolence contracted between friends * * * is mere chaff; * * * by these means let a man seek *Swarga*.

TABLET X.

The beloved of the Gods, the Prince Piyadasi, does not esteem glory and fame as of great value; and besides, for a long time it has been my fame and that of my people that the observance of moral duty and the service of the virtuous should be practised, for this is to be done. This is the fame that the beloved of the Gods desires; and inasmuch as the beloved of the Gods excels (he holds) all such reputation as no real reputation, but such as may be that of the unrighteous,—pain and chaff; for it may be acquired by crafty and unworthy persons, and by whatever further effort it is acquired it is worthless and a source of pain.

TABLET XI.

Thus says the beloved of the Gods, King Piyadasi: There is no gift like the gift of virtue, whether it be the praise of virtue, the apportionment of virtue, or relationship of virtue. This (gift) is the cherishing of slaves and dependants, pious devotion to mother and father, generous gifts to friends and kinsmen, Brahminas and Sramanas.

Respect for the life of creatures is good; this is what ought to be said by a father, by a son, by a brother, by a friend, by an acquaintance, by a relation, and even by mere neighbours: this is well; this is to be done. He who acts thus is honoured in this world, and in the other world infinite merit results from this gift of the Law.

TABLET XII.

Piyadasi, the beloved of the Gods, honors all forms of religious belief, whether professed by ascetics or by householders, both by giving alms and by other modes of showing respect. But the beloved of the Gods does not esteem alms and marks of respect so highly as the increase of that which is the essence of renown. Now the increase of that which is essential for all forms of belief is of many kinds, but nevertheless the base of it is, for each of them, praise in words. Further, a man must honor his own faith without blaming that of another, and thus will but little that is wrong occur. There are even circumstances under which the faith of others should be honoured, and in acting thus, according to circumstances, a man increases his own faith and injures that of others. He who acts differently diminishes his own faith and injures that of others; he, whoever he may be, who honours his own faith and blames that of others out of devotion to his own, and says, moreover, Let us make our faith conspicuous; that man, I say, who acts thus merely injures the faith he holds: concord alone therefore is desirable. Further, let men listen to each law and follow it with submission, for such is the desire of the King, beloved of the Gods. Further, may men of all faiths abound in knowledge and prosper in virtue! And those who have faith in this or that religion should repeat this:—The King, beloved of the Gods, does not value alms or marks of respect so much as the increase of that which is the essence of renown and the multiplication of all beliefs. To this end great ministers of law, and superintendents of women * * * and other officers are appointed, and the fruit of this institution will be the speedy increase of all religions, as well as the illumination of the law.

Extract from Tablet XIII., the rest being so injured that it does not admit of continuous translation:—

“ There is not in either class of the heretics of men, a procedure marked by such grace * * * nor so glorious, or friendly, nor even so extremely liberal as Devánampiyō's injunction for the non-injury and content of living creatures; * * * and the Greek king besides, by whom the kings of Egypt, PTOLEMAIOS and ANTIGONOS and MAGAS, * * * both here and in foreign countries, everywhere wherever they go, the religious ordinances of Devánampiyō effect conversion. Conquest is of every description, but the conquest which bringeth joy, springing from pleasant emotions, becometh joy itself. The victory of virtue is happiness * * * such victory is desired in things of this world and things of the next world. (J. R. A. S., XII. 233.)

TRANSLATION OF THE BHAIRA INSCRIPTION, BY PROFESSOR WILSON.

Piyadasi, the King, to the venerable Assembly of Magadha, commands the infliction of little pain and indulgence to animals.

It is verily known, I proclaim, to what extent my respect and favour (are placed) in Buddha, and in the Law, and in the Assembly.

Whatsoever (words) have been spoken by the divine Buddha, they have all been well said, and in them verily I declare that capability of proof is to be discerned; so that the pure law (which they teach) will be of long duration, as far as I am worthy (of being obeyed).

For these I declare are the precepts of the Law of the principal discipline (Vinaya), having overcome the oppressions of the Aryas and future perils, (and refuted) the songs of the Munis, the Sūtras of the Munis, (the practices) of inferior ascetics, the censure of a light world, and (all) false doctrines.

These things, as declared by the divine Buddha, I proclaim, and I desire them to be regarded as the precepts of the Law.

And that as many as there may be, male and female mendicants, may hear and observe them, as well also as male and female followers (of the laity).

These things I affirm, and have caused this to be written (to make known to you) that such will be my intention.