

**An Annotated Translation into English of the *Ratnamālāvadāna*
with a Critical Introduction**

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“The work described in this thesis was carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. Walter Marasinghe and Prof. Saman Ranasinghe and a report on this has not been submitted in whole or in part to any university or any other institution for another Degree/Diploma”

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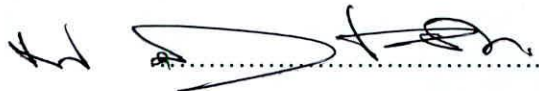
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I began learning Sanskrit as a novice Buddhist monk as early as 1997. Learning Sanskrit and studying the *Devanāgarī* characters was a fascinating challenge and I wanted to explore the fundamentals of the language in greater detail. I was able to complete my monastic school days (*piriveṇa*) by passing the Royal Pundit examination at the age of 19 (in 2003), and then began my four-year undergraduate studies at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura in 2004.

During my undergraduate studies, from 2004 to 2008, I explored several areas of interest, and with guidance from the teaching panel, comprising Dr Maduruoya Dhammissara, Ven Meepitiye Seelaratana, Prof Walter Marasinghe, Prof S Weeratunga, and Prof Saman Chandra Ranasinghe, I was able to extend my knowledge of Sanskrit. I thank them for their guidance and encouragement. In particular, I thank Prof Marasinghe, a co-supervisor of this PhD dissertation and my supervisor during my BA Honours dissertation, and Prof Saman Ranasinghe, the other co-supervisor, who helped me to see many horizons, not only for my studies but also for life in general. I know I asked them many questions while I was out of the country and I appreciate their support. I will always remember their valuable and enjoyable lessons on the *Vedas*, *brāhmanas*, and *upaniṣad* texts, and on classical Sanskrit works like *Raghuvamṣa* and *Meghadūta* or the epics, *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*. I would also like to extend

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As I am now winding up my doctoral dissertation, which was begun in late-2010, I would like to thank my parents and my siblings for their kindness and support that helped to make my PhD studies enjoyable.

When I arrived in Canada in late-2011, I was able to study many relevant books and articles and had access to online resources from the University of British Columbia where I began working as the Buddhist chaplain. The Canadian academic environment has been extremely beneficial and has helped me with my advanced studies in both Sanskrit and Buddhism. I appreciate those who taught me about the openness, flexibility, respect, and liberal thinking that is prevalent in Canada. I thank my friends and well-wishers who helped me in many ways so that I would be able to successfully complete this massive task.

DEDICATION

To my parents and siblings

An Annotated Translation into English of the *Ratnamālāvadāna* with a Critical Introduction

Rev. Gangodawila Chandima

ABSTRACT

Ratnamālāvadāna (RMV) is an *avadānamalā* text which extolls the significance of both the immediate and post-immediate benefits of respecting the triple gems (*Triratna*). The text belongs to the Sarvāstivāda School. All of the narrations occur between *Upagupta* and King Aśoka. Although the text, as given in the manuscripts, includes thirty-eight narrations, I have selected only the first twelve, which represents in the MS (A) manuscript used by Takahata for his edition and remarked by Rajendralala Mithra.

This dissertation primarily embodies the first ever annotated English translation of the RMV (Narrations 1-12) with a critical introduction. Although Mahendra Lal Das translated only the second *avadāna* of the RMV “*Cakrāvadana*” into English, he had not been able to make any annotated English translation or a critical study of the text. The only document regarding the text which was available to scholars was the Kanga Takahata’s edition, which was published in 1954 under the sponsorship of the Harvard Yenching Institute of Cambridge. Therefore, the main purpose of my research is to prepare the first ever annotated English translation of the RMV (Narrations 1-12) for those who will be interested to study the work in English.

Turning to the contents of the research, I have first given an overview of the *avadāna* literature which included the topics, such as use of the term *avadāna*, different *avadāna* texts, structure of *avadāna* texts, correlation between *avadāna* and *apadāna* and how instrumental is *avadāna* literature for the contemporary and future scholarship. Then, I delved into an introduction of the RMV text and its chronology. After that, I opened my discussion about the most overriding aspects of the RMV such as the society and doctrine. It was also noted that the society of the RMV can be used to elicit lot of trade customs and societal beliefs of the then society which could not been seen in the similar *avadāna* or *avadānamālā* texts. In the study of the doctrinal points, I was able to delineate the RMV text as being very similar to many other *avadānamālā* texts based on the simple and complex *dharma* matters. Then, I gave a comprehensive study of the grammatical points of the text, in accordance with the rules of the *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary* prepared by Franklin Edgerton. In the chapter two, the Romanized Text of the RMV (I-XII) was given as transcribed by Kalus Wille of the University of Gottingen. Please note that I have given the text in Romanized script as Takahata himself has provided his version of the text in Roman characters. Chapter Three forms the annotated English translation of the RMV. In translating the text, care has been taken to be with the style and the nature of the story.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AN	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya</i>
Av	<i>Avadānaśataka</i>
Bbh	<i>Bodhisattvabhūmi</i>
BV	<i>Buddhavaṃsa</i>
DhpA	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā</i>
Dharmas	<i>Dharmasaṃgraha</i>
Divy	<i>Divyāvadāna</i>
DA	<i>Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i>
Gv	<i>Gaṇḍavyūha</i>
Kv	<i>Kāraṇḍavyūha</i>
Laṅk	<i>Laṅkāvatārasūtra</i>
LV	<i>Lalitavistara</i>
Māy	<i>Mahā-Mayūri</i>
Mmk	<i>Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa</i>
MN	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i>
Mv	<i>Mahāvastu</i>
Mvy	<i>Mahāvvyutpatti</i>
RMV	<i>Ratnamālāvadāna</i>
Sādh	<i>Sādhanamālā</i>
Samādh	<i>Samādhirājasūtra</i>
SP	<i>Saddharmapuṇḍarīka</i>
Suv	<i>Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra</i>
VT	<i>Vinaya Texts</i>

CHAPTER 1. CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE *RATNAMĀLĀVADĀNA*

Before moving to a critical study of the *Ratnamālāvadāna* (hereafter, RMV), one should first consider what *avadāna* means in order to understand the scope of what I will cover in this chapter. The most recent doctoral dissertation of the *avadāna* was completed by Tyson (2013), at Cornell University, New York. According to Tyson, a number of key questions need to be addressed when studying the general literature on the *avadāna*. For instance, what is characteristically seen in the genre, what are the semantics of the word, and what assumptions do scholars and other readers hold for its use in Buddhist scholarship? Second, what makes the study of the *avadāna* so important for contemporary and future scholarship? What insights can be gained from this kind of study, in terms of further understanding of the *avadāna* literature? Therefore, I will begin with a thumbnail sketch of the *avadāna* literature (Sharma, 1985), from the details of primary sources and from the contributions of modern scholars, before moving to a critical study of the RMV.

1.1 What is *Avadāna* Literature?

The etymology of *avadāna* seems to have two main explanations, which were proposed by scholars such as J.S. Speyer and Max Müller. Speyer (1958) initially held the view that the term reflected a manifestation of segregation and glorious achievements (object of a legend) at a later time, including illustrious actions or heroically performed feats.

Speyer describes the term *avadāna* as used to denote illustrious actions and feats in the Classical Sanskrit works:

Outside the Buddhistic world the Sanskrit word *avadāna* is used to denote illustrious actions and feats. So Kālidāsa, Raghuvamśa II,21, relating that Rāma obtained a supernatural weapon from Viśvāmitra who was pleased with the heroic conduct of his pupil, says that he got it, and in a similar manner the word occurs in Kumārasambhava 7,48. Similarly, Daṇḍin employs it in the 2nd ucchvāsa of the uttarakhāṇḍa of Daśakumāracarita. (Speyer, 1958, p. ii-iii).

This seems to be the case when considering the vast majority of books written and compiled outside Buddhist literature, in Sanskrit, which were formally identified as Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit by Edgerton (1970). Nevertheless, this claim contradicts the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit works, as revealed in presentations of the *karma* and *vipāka* ideologies. Almost all *avadāna* scholars, including Tyson, seem to have forgotten the role played by *vipāka* in studies of the subject. Therefore, in understanding the term *avadāna*, it would be worthwhile to know the *vipāka* perspective of the *avadāna* texts. One of the classical lexicographers, Amarasimha places the meaning of the term *avadāna* as *karmavṛttam*, which means stories of *karmas*. Given the deeper meaning of illustrious actions, the word *karmavṛttam* can also be taken to imply illustrious or adventurous actions (Sastri, 1945). Speyer (1958) was also of the opinion that *karma* can certainly have *vipāka* perspectives. According to Tatelman (2000):

Hence, we find the pervasive doctrinal terms, *karma-phala*, 'the fruits of actions' and *karma-vipaka*, 'the ripening of actions,' both of which denote that morally or religiously significant actions in one birth determine or at least influence circumstances in later births. (Tatelman, 2000, p. 5).

In addition, based on Speyer's interpretation, Maurice Winternitz (1972) added that the *avadāna* could also refer to noteworthy deeds, and more suitably, heroic acts or feats. Therefore, Speyer is the first to interpret that the meaning of *avadāna* refers to adventures or heroic acts. Other scholars, like E.J. Thomas (1933) and P.L. Vaidya (1958) have largely concurred with the definition of the term as referring to "glorious achievements" or a heroic story. The idea of the heroic story entails a "good, illustrious, heroic or noble act." Monier-Williams (Monier-Williams, Leumann & Cappeller, 1899) and Hermann Grassmann (1964) mention the term *avadāna* in two different contexts. Monier-Williams (Monier-Williams, Leumann & Cappeller, 1899) and Hermann Grassmann (1964) mention the term *avadāna* in two different contexts. Monier-Williams translates it to mean a great or glorious achievement, while Grassmann translates *ava+dā* in the German language to mean *befriedigen* (to give pleasure) and 'beschenken' (to present).

Max Müller's (1881) interpretation of the term's derivation is based on *ava+day* (to cleanse, to purify). He goes on to suggest that the word could also mean a legend, originally a pure and virtuous act... and afterwards, a sacred story, and possibly also a narration that improves the purification of mind. Interestingly, this idea is well supported by Kanga Takahata (1954), who observed that all of the *avadāna* literature emphasizes purification of mind:

These are the main theories put forward; though one cannot reach any rapid conclusions about the original meaning of *avadāna*, yet it seems beyond doubt that the central idea underlying *avadāna* literature is in north and south alike, the purification of the mind. It is explained in many places in Buddhist literature to make various offerings and perform acts of worship to the Buddha to purify the mind," (Takahata, 1954, p. xxii).

Also Takahata goes on to say how he understands the term in the Chinese Buddhist context.

“Let us consider next sense-changes of this word in the Chinese translations, thus:

In....., it states, with actual examples, that the word *avadāna* is word-like (that is, ordinary) soft and shallow words.....; it says that there are two kinds of, the one is likely to refer to *itivuttaka*, and the other is named..... (karmaic causations appeared in *tripitaka* and *mahāyāna*) and it gives ‘examples’, but the account is not clear and difficult to follow. Next, in we find the word *avadāna* explained as a narrative sequence of causation as one finds in the *sūtra*. The wise talk in sequence, sense, and explanations; there is no confusion, and this is what is known as *avadāna*. (Takahata, 1954, p. xxii).

Joel Tatelman (1954) suggests an agricultural context for the term in a thorough study of the nexus between *avadāna* and *karma*. In his treatment of the term, the moral causality of volitional acts are deeds that one ‘sows,’ in a given birth, which then ‘bear fruit’ or are ‘harvested.’ Products become the results in subsequent births. Tatelman states:

By a process of semantic development which, at least for Pāli, has been clearly delineated, this agricultural sense of the term became identified with the central Buddhist doctrine of *karman*, the moral causality of volitional action, in which the deeds one ‘sows,’ performs, in a given birth, ‘bear fruit’ or are harvested,’ produce their results, in subsequent births. In the predominantly agricultural societies of ancient and mediaeval South Asia, employing such universally understood concepts as doctrinal terms made perfect sense. (Tatelman, 2000, p. 5).

Tatelman’s view can be combined into the final interpretation of the term. The Pāli canon (Carpenter, 1910; Cutler, 1994) often notes that engaging in *karma* is like