

## Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta

### The Discourse on the Advice to Puṇṇa

[When are we ready to teach the Dharma?]

(Majjhima Nikāya 145/3:267-270 ≈ Puṇṇa Sutta, S 35.88/4:60-63)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

#### 1 Puṇṇa of Sunāparanta

**1.1 Merchant householder.** The Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta is almost identical to **the (Sunāparanta) Puṇṇa Sutta** (S 35.88) in the Saṃyutta,<sup>1</sup> where only the opening and closing paragraphs vary slightly. According to the Commentaries,<sup>2</sup> which give a detailed account of Puṇṇa, he is born into the family of a merchant householder of Suppāraka in the Sunāparanta country.<sup>3</sup> When Puṇṇa reaches manhood, he goes with a great caravan of merchandise to Sāvattthī. He is said to own “500 carts,” and has a younger brother whom he would occasionally bring along on business trips to Sāvattthī.<sup>4</sup>

**The Majjhima and the Saṃyutta Commentaries**<sup>5</sup> give an interesting account of his conversion. On his last business trip to Sāvattthī, Puṇṇa sees a crowd bearing incense, flowers and other offerings to Jeta, vana. On inquiring what they are doing, they say that these offerings are for the Buddha. Upon hearing the word “Buddha,” the sound of the name “penetrated his outer skin, and so on, right into the bone-marrow” (*chavi, camm'ādāni chinditvā atṭhi, miñjam āhacca atṭhāsi*). The Majjhima Ṭīkā explains this as his being ecstatic with joy on hearing the word “Buddha” (MAṬ:Be 2:423).

The Buddha's instruction to Puṇṇa on how delighting in the sense-objects and clinging to them bring about suffering is also same teaching given to Miga, jāla as recorded in **the Miga, jāla S 2** (S 35.64).<sup>6</sup> As a result of the teaching, Miga, jāla becomes an arhat.

**1.2 Āgama & Sanskrit versions.** The Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta has two Chinese parallels, one in the Saṃyukta Āgama,<sup>7</sup> and the other an individual translation.<sup>8</sup> The popularity of the Puṇṇa story is attested by the fact that it is found in many other texts: Sanskrit **Divyāvadāna**,<sup>9</sup> the Chinese **Bhaiṣajya, vastu**,<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S 35.88/4:60-63. DPPN, following **ThaA 1:168**, identifies Puṇṇa with **Puṇṇaka** of Ap 399/2:341, who is one of Bāvarī's 16 pupils listed in the chapter (*vagga* 41). However, this may be an error since our Puṇṇa comes from a merchant family and there is no record that he has been a member of any religious group until his going forth. The other possibility is that this is the Ap of Puṇṇa of Sunāparanta, but located (inadvertently) in the place of Puṇṇaka, the disciple of Bāvarī. This latter possibility is greater as evident from some editions of Puṇṇa Theragāthā Comy (such as the Nālandā ed Chaudhary). For tr see (2) here.

<sup>2</sup> MA 5:85-92; SA 2:374-380; ThaA 1:168. Most of this retelling is based on MA which is most detailed, and ThaA giving only a brief account. SA's account of Puṇṇa is essentially identical to that of MA, differing only in the word analyses.

<sup>3</sup> Sunāparanta was on the west coast of India, where its capital was Suppāraka, today called Sopāra, in the district of Thāna, near modern Mumbai, Maharashtra state. See (3) below.

<sup>4</sup> See Tatelman 2000:57-58, 113-119.

<sup>5</sup> MA 5:86; SA 2:374 f. See also ThaA 1:167-169.

<sup>6</sup> S 35.64/4:38.

<sup>7</sup> SĀ 311 = T2.89bc. Akanuma, *The Comparative Catalogue of Chinese Āgamas & Pāli Nikāyas*, 1990:171, notes that SĀ 215 = T2.54b as a parallel to M 145. However, SĀ 215, as noted by Analayo (2006), is quite different from M 145, but is closer to **Upavāna S** (S 35.70/4:41), except that the protagonist here is the monk Upavāna, whereas SĀ 215 speaks of the monk Puṇṇa, 富留那, which may have led Akanuma to associate this discourse with M 145.

<sup>8</sup> T108 = T2.502c-503a (unknown translator, 4<sup>th</sup>-early 5<sup>th</sup> cent), entitled “spoken by the Buddha to [Puṇṇa] Mantāni,putta, 佛說滿願子, apparently confusing the protagonist of the present discourse, Puṇṇa of Sunāparanta, with Puṇṇa Mantāni,putta of Kapilavatthu.

<sup>9</sup> See Divyāvadāna: Cowell 1886:37-40; Vaidya 1959:22-24.

<sup>10</sup> T1488 = T24.11c15-12c.

and the Tibetan **Bhaiṣajya, vastu**.<sup>11</sup> This longer version (based on the Sanskrit text), found in the Chinese Āgama,<sup>12</sup> is also depicted in the paintings of the Ajanta caves.<sup>13</sup> The opening, common to all the versions, has Puṇṇa approaching the Buddha and requesting a teaching in brief—this event is also alluded to by the **Mahā,saṅghika Vinaya**.<sup>14</sup> Many of the versions say that the Buddha praised Puṇṇa for asking such a question.<sup>15</sup>

**The Pūrṇāvadāna**, a Sanskrit work, gives a dramatic account of his conversion quite different from the Pali account (which is relatively brief anyway). The Pūrṇa of the Avadāna is himself a sailor and makes six mercantile voyages, and it is on the 7<sup>th</sup> and last voyage (when he visits the island of Yellow Sandalwood Forest), that he converts on board ship mid-ocean while listening to the Śrāvastī merchants chanting their devotions:

At night, at the time just before dawn, those merchants chanted in their entirety “The Exultation” (Udāna), “The Way to the Further<sup>16</sup> Shore” (Pārāyaṇa), “Discerning the Truth” (Satya, -dṛṣṭi), “Verses of the Elders” (Sthavira, gāthā), “Verses Concerning Śaila” (Śaila, gāthā), “The Sage’s Verses” (Muni, gāthā) and “Discourses Concerning the Goal” (Artha, vargīya Sūtras).<sup>17</sup> After listening to them, Pūrṇa exclaimed, “Sirs, you sing beautiful songs!”

They replied, “Caravan-leader [*sārtha, vāha*],<sup>18</sup> these are not (mere) songs! How could you possibly think that? These are the words of the Awakened One, the Buddha!”<sup>19</sup>

Hearing the title, “the Buddha,” which he had never heard before, Pūrṇa got goose-bumps all over. Very respectfully, he asked, “Sirs, who is this person called ‘the Buddha’?”

The Śrāvastī merchants told him...

(Pūrṇāvadāna = Tatelman tr 2000:57 f; see 116-121 on his analysis)

There and then the thought of renunciation arises in Pūrṇa, and on reaching land and home, he takes leave of his brother. He goes to Anātha, piṇḍada (a fellow merchant householder) in Śrāvastī to ask him on how to go about it and in due course joins the order before the Buddha (Tatelman 2000:58 f). This is the Sanskrit Pūrṇāvadāna account.

**1.3 Puṇṇa meets the Buddha.** The Pali account continues saying that Puṇṇa then joins the crowd and sits at the edge of the assembly listening enthralled to the Buddha’s teaching. There and then the thought of renunciation arises in his mind. After the teaching, he invites the Buddha for a dawn meal on the next day. On that day, the Buddha and his monks receive their meal offering in the pavilion he has specially constructed.

At the end of the meal, he undertakes the Uposatha Precepts<sup>20</sup> and then summons his treasurer, briefing him on which goods have been sold (*vissajjita*), and leaving the rest of his property to his younger brother. Then, he leaves for Jeta, vana, where he joins the order and goes into meditation.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Dulba ka (vol 1, Derge ed) 304b-307b.

<sup>12</sup> T202 = T4.393c-397a & T211 = T4.588bc; tr in Charles Willemen 1999:91-93. T202 = T4.396c & T211 = T4.588c2 treat the events of M 145 only briefly, saying that after Puṇṇa goes forth the Buddha teaches him the Dharma so that he becomes an arhat.

<sup>13</sup> D Schlingloff 1988:37-40.

<sup>14</sup> T1425 = T 22.415c15.

<sup>15</sup> SĀ 215 = T2.54b7; SĀ 311 = T2.89b5; Divy:eCN 37,17 & Divy:eV 22,28; Bhaiṣajya, vastu at T1448 = T24.12a6 & ‘Dulba ka (Derge ed) 305a2.

<sup>16</sup> “Further” is often used in an abstract sense and also has a relative sense of continuance: “far,” with a sense of the finality of reaching a goal, would be better here.

<sup>17</sup> **Koṭikarṇāvadāna** (Divy 12.23-25; Mūla, sarvāstivāda Vinaya, ed Bagchi 2.168.15-17) & Mūla, sarvāstivāda **Samyukta Āgama** (T99.362c10) have the same list with minor variations. Interestingly, all these passages are in verse and incl some of the oldest Buddhist texts: Lamotte 1988a:156-164; Warder 1980:203 f, 229-239; Norman 1983:60-75.

<sup>18</sup> Skt *sārtha, vāha* (bearer of wealth or “business leader”); P *sarathī* (caravan leader): they have close senses but are not etym related.

<sup>19</sup> *Naitāni gītāni | kiṃ nu khalv etad | buddhavacanam* |; see Tatelman 2000:85 n58.

After his ordination, Puṇṇa finds the area around Sāvattihī unconducive for his meditation and wishes to return to his home country to continue his practice. He approaches the Buddha to obtain guidance (by way of a brief teaching) before leaving. The Buddha gives him the teaching recorded in the Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta [§§2-4].

**1.4 Puṇṇa's four residences in Sunāparanta.** On arriving in Sunāparanta, Puṇṇa first lives at Abbhahatthi Pabbata (Cloud-hand Hill),<sup>21</sup> where he goes into the traders' village for alms. His younger brother, **Cūla Puṇṇa**,<sup>22</sup> recognizing him, determines that he should remain right there.

Puṇṇa however moves on to the Samudda Giri Vihāra (Sea-hill Vihara), where he marks out his ambulatory (*caṅkama*) with magnetite or lodestone,<sup>23</sup> he had difficulty meditating because of the waves breaking against the magnetite rocks. To effectively meditate, he psychically determines (*adhittāsi*) that the sea remains calm.

Leaving Samudda Giri Vihāra, he goes to Mātula Giri (Uncle's Hill), but there the incessant cries of a big flock of birds, day and night, distract him.

Finally, he goes to the Makulak'ārāma Vihāra<sup>24</sup> (Budding Park Vihara) (at Makulaka Gāma), which is neither too far nor too near the merchant village (for collecting alms), and it is isolated and quiet so that he is able to do his spiritual exercises. So there he constructs a walkway for walking meditation, and continues with his meditation.

**1.5 Puṇṇa saves the sailors.** While Puṇṇa is residing at Makulaka Gāma, his brother Cūla Puṇṇa, before setting sail in a trading ship, visits Puṇṇa, undertakes the precepts from him, and asks for his protection during the voyage. He sails off with five hundred others, and lands on an island where red sandalwood<sup>25</sup> grows. Knowing the sandalwood's great commercial and medicinal value, they jettison their goods and fill their ship with valuable red sandalwood.<sup>26</sup>

The story goes on to say that the spirits (*amanussa*) of the island, angered by the merchants cutting down the sandalwood trees and removing them, raise a tempest and terrify the sailors with their fearful forms. Each merchant invokes his own guardian deity, but Cūla Puṇṇa recalls his brother. Puṇṇa, sensing his brother's need, travels through the air to the ship, and, at sight of him, the spirits disappear. Puṇṇa calms the waters and tells the sailors, "Fear not!" Then he goes into deep meditation to summon his psychic powers, with which he guides them safely home.

**1.6 The Sandalwood Hall.** Back in Suppāraka, the elated sailors relate to their wives and children regarding their ocean ordeal and Puṇṇa's intercession. The five hundred merchants, together with their wives and children, then go before Puṇṇa and take the three refuges, becoming lay-disciples. So there are five hundred laymen and five hundred lay women as followers of Puṇṇa. Having unloaded their valuable

<sup>20</sup> These are the 8 precepts, ie abstaining from killing; stealing; from any kind of sex; from lying; from drinks and intoxicants; from food at the wrong time (ie a moderate meal taken only between sunrise and noon); from dancing, singing, music and unseemly shows, wearing garlands, scents and unguents; from a high or luxurious resting place (A 4:248).

<sup>21</sup> "Cloud-hand Hill." MA:Be 5:87 Ajjuhaththa Pabbata; PTS Amba,haththa Pabbata. SA 2:376 says it is a traders' village (*vāñija,gāmam*).

<sup>22</sup> Cūla Puṇṇa means "Puṇṇa Junior," ie Puṇṇa's younger brother. On Puṇṇa's name, see Tatelman 2000:98

<sup>23</sup> *Aya,kanta pāsāṇa*.

<sup>24</sup> *Makula* means either "(n) a bud; (adj) budding" or "knob."

<sup>25</sup> "Red sandalwood," *lohita,candana* (MA 5:88); *ratta,candana* (ThaA 1:168). The Skt versions give it as "cow's-head sandalwood" (*go,śrīṣa candana*, Pūrṇāvadāna 19.1 = tr Tatelman 2000:53), yellow or brass-coloured (SED: *gośrīṣa* Chandra 1997:143); or "divine sandalwood" (*divya,candana*, Bodhisattvāvadāna,kalpa,latā).

<sup>26</sup> Sandalwood then is a highly prized commodity both for its fragrance and its cooling quality. Sandalwood powder smeared all over the body is said to quickly bring down the fever. "A small branch, the size of four fingers, is worth a hundred thousand (pieces of money)!" (*catur'angula,mattā ghaṭikā sata,sahassam agghati*). Here, *catur'angula,matta* ("the size of four fingers") can mean either 4 fingers' breadth or circumference about that of four fingers together; very likely it is the latter. Tatelman gives it as "four fingers in length" (2000:182). See also Tatelman 2000:111.

merchandise, they set aside a portion of the sandalwood for Puṇṇa, who refuses them and then asks them, “Have you seen the Teacher?”<sup>27</sup>

When they reply that they have never seen the Buddha, Puṇṇa instructs them to use the sandalwood to build a circle of pavilions.<sup>28</sup> Puṇṇa’s followers build what is called the Sandalwood Hall (*candana sālā*) for the Buddha. When it is completed, the Majjhima Commentary says that in the evening, Puṇṇa flies to Sāvathī to invite the Buddha (MA 5:89). The Thera, gāthā Commentary says that he invites the Buddha “with flowers as messenger” (*puppha, dūtena*) (ThaA 1:169).

**1.7 Kuṇḍadhāna.**<sup>29</sup> The Buddha then instructs Ānanda to arrange for 500 monks less one by means of meal-tickets. Kuṇḍadhāna is the first among the arhats to be chosen to accompany the Buddha to Sunā-paranta. Ānanda announces the ticket-meal invitation to the sky-going monks (*nabha, cārikā bhikkhū*) (that is, those capable of teleportation or astral travel).<sup>30</sup> The Thera, gāthā Commentary says that the Buddha then, “by means of psychic power, goes there along with that many monks.”<sup>31</sup>

The Majjhima Commentary says that Sakra, the deva king, provides five hundred celestial kiosks (*kūṭāgāra*)—that is, a kind of celestial mansion (*vimāna*)—for the journey, one of which is empty.<sup>32</sup> This is subsequently used by **the ascetic Sacca, bandha**, whom the Buddha meets on Mt Saccabandha. After listening to the Dharma, he becomes an arhat with all the powers, and the Buddha receives him into the order.

On approaching the merchant village (Makulaka Gāma), the Buddha lands the kiosks outside and renders them invisible. The merchants and villagers welcome the Buddha and the monks and bring them to the Makul’ārāma Vihāra, where the merchants and villagers offer a munificent meal the Buddha and the monks.

After the meal, the Buddha enters the main pavilion, that is, the Great Fragrant Cell (*mahā gandha, -kuṭi*),<sup>33</sup> where he rests. While the Buddha is resting, the people take their breakfast, undertake the uposatha precepts, and then with incense, flowers and other offerings, return to the monastery to hear the Dharma. Many are released from bondage, and there is a great public display of religious fervour for the Buddha.<sup>34</sup>

**1.8 Nammadā river.** For the benefit of the people of Makulaka Gāma, the Buddha stays in the Great Fragrant Cell for a few days (*katipāham*), emerging only in the mornings. Then, on the last day, he goes into Makulaka Gāma for alms, and then sends Puṇṇa back to the village, instructing him to reside there.

The Buddha then goes to the bank of **the river Nammadā** nearby, where he is welcomed by the naga king, Nammada (Skt Narmada), who brings him to his serpent-realm.<sup>35</sup> There the naga king pays homage

<sup>27</sup> On “seeing” (*dassana*) the teacher, see SD 9.7e.

<sup>28</sup> *Maṇḍala, mālā*, which Tatelman renders as “a circular pavilion” (2000:183). However, it should be noted that all *maṇḍalas* are circular; moreover, *mālā* cannot mean “circular,” but means “garland, circular ring (of things).” The following context also supports “a circle of pavilions.”

<sup>29</sup> He is the first and foremost of those monks who receive food-tickets (*salāka, bhatta*) (A 1:24). His name in Skt is Kuṇḍopadhānīyaka (“he who uses a water-pot as a pillow”). See Pūrṇāvadāna = tr Tatelman 2000:68 f.

<sup>30</sup> MA 5:90. According to the Commentaries, the distance between Sāvathī and Suppāraka was 130 yojanas (MA 5:90) or 120 yojanas (DhA 2:213). Scholars generally take a yojana to be about 11.25 km (7 mi). The modern India map shows the distance between the two places to be about 1500 km (900 mi). Cf Basham 1967:503 f; Kosambi 1970: 161.

<sup>31</sup> *Bhagavā ca iddhānubhāvena tattakehi bhikkhūhi saddhim tattha gantvā* (ThaA 1:169). Here, it could be that the Buddha either teleports everyone to Suppāraka, or travels astrally. From the general context, the latter is more likely. Tatelman mistakes *tattakehi* (= *tāvataka*, of such size, so large) for *takkehi* (“by means of logic”) (2000:190).

<sup>32</sup> MA 5:90. It is not clear whether the Buddha himself powers these kiosks (whereby Ānanda would have come along); or, the invited monks each powered the kiosks themselves (in which case they have to be arhats with psychic powers); or, that Sakra powers them. However, below, the story says that the Buddha himself renders the kiosks invisible upon landing outside Makulaka Gāma.

<sup>33</sup> See John S Strong, 1977.

<sup>34</sup> *mahantaṃ Buddha, kolāhalaṃ ahoṣi*.

<sup>35</sup> MA 5:92; SA 2:379; KhA 149.

to the Three Jewels, and the Buddha teaches him the Dharma. Just before the Buddha leaves, the naga king requests a relic of the Buddha with which to worship. The Buddha places his footprint on the Nammadā bank and it becomes a footprint shrine (*pāda, cetiya*). The river waves hide the shrine, but reveal it when they recede, and it is greatly venerated.<sup>36</sup>

After Nammadā, the Buddha visits **Mt Sacca,bandha** again, this time instructing Saccabandha to bring to the path to nirvana those he earlier on has misled with wrong views. Saccabandha, too, asks the Buddha for a relic as an object of veneration. The Buddha places his footprint in the solid rock, “as if he were making an impression on a heap of fresh mud.”<sup>37</sup> Then he returns to Jeta, vana.

**1.9 Did Puṇṇa really exist?** Puṇṇa is said to have become an arhat [§7] within the year of his stay in Sunāparanta, and wins over 500 male lay disciples and 500 female lay disciples. It is interesting that although Puṇṇa Sunāparantaka is one of the 80 great disciples (*asīti mahā, sāvaka*), listed as thirty-seventh,<sup>38</sup> he is *not* listed in the Eka Nipāta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya amongst those monks with foremost qualities (*agga-ṭ, thāna*). However, he is prominent for diligence in his duties and moral virtue.

The (Sunāparanta) Puṇṇa Sutta says that Puṇṇa dies during the first rains retreat in Sunāparanta. Since the Buddha still refers to Puṇṇa as a clansman (*kula, putta*), he must have died within a short time after returning to Sunāparanta. The texts, however, do not tell us how he dies, except that he dies during the first rains there (S 35.88).<sup>39</sup>

The early Pali texts,<sup>40</sup> the early Buddhist Sanskrit texts<sup>41</sup> and the Pali Commentaries<sup>42</sup> all agree that the Buddha's teachings were known in the port of Sopāra (Skt Śūrpāraka) in Sunāparanta (Skt Śroṇāparantaka). Some scholars have questioned whether Buddhism had spread beyond the Buddha's Middle Country (*majjhima, desa*) or reached Sunāparanta during his own lifetime. Is it possible that the story of Puṇṇa's work as recorded in the Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta was a later pious fabrication, perhaps of the Asokan period? **Lamotte** thinks that

Even if this legend is probably apocryphal, it remains nonetheless a fact that at the Mauryan period, the western coast in general, and Śūrpāraka in particular, had been subjected to Buddhist propaganda. (1988a:330)

**Joel Tatelman**, in *The Glorious Deeds of Pūrṇa*, thinks that the historical Pūrṇa very likely lived during in the Mauryan period (324-187 BCE), began his career as a merchant in Śūrpāraka; later in his life, joined the order in one of the major centres in northern India; and in due course returned home, where he was instrumental in establishing a viable local Buddhist tradition.<sup>43</sup> However, he adds,

it is also possible that sometime around the beginning of the Common Era, imaginative monks, inspired by the composition of the great biographies of the Buddha and by the character and accomplishment of a revered teacher, created a composite character—‘Pūrṇa, Apostle to the Śroṇāparāntakans’—to whom, over time and with much borrowing between different local Sanghas, they attributed a variety of adventures in order to glorify and authenticate their thriving local Buddhist tradition. Exactly what happened we will never know. Fortunately, our focus here is narrative traditions, nor historical events. (2000:3)

<sup>36</sup> When the modern Thais float their krathong on the waters during the Loy Krathong festival in November, they would say that they are venerating this sacred footprint on the Narmadā.

<sup>37</sup> MA 5:92.

<sup>38</sup> ThaA 3:205.

<sup>39</sup> S 35.88/4:60-63.

<sup>40</sup> **Puṇṇ'ovāda S** (M 145/3:267-270 = S 35.88/4:60-63).

<sup>41</sup> Mūla, sarvāstivāda Vinaya, T1448, ch 2-4, pp 7c-17a; Divy 24-55; Mahā Karma, vibhaṅga (ed Lévi) 64 f.

<sup>42</sup> MA 5:85-92; SA 2:374-379.

<sup>43</sup> In his fn, Tatelman qu Lamotte (1988a:297, 298, 300, 329 f), says that he assigns Pūrṇa to the Mauryan period.” However, I am unable to locate this statement, and all that Lamotte apparently says is the quote above (1988a:330). Cf HIRAKAWA Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism*, 1990:77.

## 2 Punna's past life

According to **the Thera,gāthā Commentary**, ninety-one aeons ago, when the world was empty of Buddhas, Puṇṇa (or Puṇṇaka, according to the Apadāna)<sup>44</sup> was a learned brahmin who later became a hermit in Himavā (the Himalayas). Near his abode, a Pratyeka Buddha had just died, and at the moment of his death there was a great radiance. The ascetic Puṇṇa cremated the Pratyeka Buddha's remains and in due course sprinkled scented water on the pyre to extinguish the flames. A deva,putra (young deva)—a yaksha, according to the Apadāna<sup>45</sup>—witnessing the event, prophesied Puṇṇa's future greatness, giving him his name. In fact, throughout his many lives has always been called Puṇṇa.<sup>46</sup>

Puṇṇa's past life where he cultivates the seeds of spirituality that are to flower and fruit in his last life as the Buddha's disciple is recounted in verse in **the Apadāna**, narrated by Puṇṇa himself:

- 1 Sheltering in a craggy peak, the self-born<sup>47</sup> Aparājita,  
the awakened one, lay ill, deep in the mountains.
- 2 All at once a great clamour arose all around my hermitage;  
there was a great light, for the awakened one had passed away into nirvana.
- 3 Whatever bears, wolves, hyenas, lions and other beasts of prey  
there were in the forest grove rushed there [to where Aparājita was].
- 4 Seeing what was happening, I went to that cave,  
and there saw that the fully awakened one, Aparājita, had attained nirvana.
- 5 Like a king of sal trees in full bloom, like the risen one of a hundred rays,  
like coal burning flamelessly, Aparājita passed into final nirvana.
- 6 Having gathered grass and wood, I made therein [in the cave] a funeral pyre.  
And after making a well-made pyre, I burned his bodily remains.
- 7 Having burned the body, I sprinkled it [the relics] with scented water.  
There and then, a yaksha, standing mid-air, called my name.
- 8 "Because of the service you have fulfilled for the self-born great seer,  
your name, O sage, will always be 'fulfiller' (*Puṇṇaka*)!"
- 9 Having passed away from that body, I went to heaven,  
where celestial perfume filled the air.<sup>48</sup>
- 10 There, too, the name Puṇṇaka was given to me.  
Both as a god and as a man, I fulfilled the prediction (of the yaksha).<sup>49</sup>
- 11 This is the end for me: I have come to the last existence.  
Here, too, my name is Puṇṇaka, the name by which I am known.<sup>50</sup>
- 12 Having pleased the self-awakened Gotama, the lordly bull of the Sakyas,<sup>51</sup>  
having thoroughly understood all the influxes,<sup>52</sup> I dwell influx-free.

<sup>44</sup> See below here.

<sup>45</sup> See below here.

<sup>46</sup> ThaA 1:167-169.

<sup>47</sup> *Svayam,bhū*. PED defines as "self-dependent." It is obvious here that the Pratyeka Buddha is meant, who is said to be "self-created" in the sense that he awakens by himself, and also founds neither Teaching (*sāsana*) nor Sangha.

<sup>48</sup> *Tattha divyamayo gandho antalikkhe pavāyati*, lit, "there divinely-made perfume pervaded the air."

<sup>49</sup> *Saṅkappaṃ pūrayāma-aham*. Tatelman has "I fulfilled [that divinity's] prediction" (2000:190).

<sup>50</sup> Ap:C *Idhāpi puṇṇako nāma nāmadheyyaṃ pakāṣati*, Ap:PTS *Idhāpi puṇṇako nāma nāmaṃ mayhaṃ paññāyati*.

<sup>51</sup> *Tosayitvāna sambuddhaṃ Gotamaṃ Sakya,pungavaṃ*.

<sup>52</sup> The "influxes" (*āsava*) are taints ("deadly taints," RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists four *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kāma'āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhava'āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāśava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). See D 3:220, 275; A 2:163, 165; A 1:146, 192, 194; cf V 2:83; Sn 594, 656. See also **Tevijja S** (D 13/1:235-252) = SD 1.8.

- 13 Since I did that karma ninety-one aeons ago,  
I have known no evil birth: this is the result of that act.<sup>53</sup>
- 14 Defilements burnt up, all existences abolished,<sup>54</sup>  
Like an elephant breaking its fetter, I dwell influx-free.
- 15 Well come have I before the Buddha,  
The three true knowledges<sup>55</sup> attained: the Buddha's teaching has been attained!
- 16 The four analytical skills,<sup>56</sup> and these eight liberations,<sup>57</sup>  
The six direct knowledges<sup>58</sup> have been realized: the Buddha's teaching has been attained!
- (Ap 399/2:341)

### 3 Sunāparanta

Sunāparanta (Skt Śronā, parāntaka)<sup>59</sup> was on the west coast of India, where its capital was Suppāraka (Skt Śūrpāraka),<sup>60</sup> today called **Sopāra** (or Supāra), in the district of Ṭhāna, near modern Mumbai, Maharashtra state. According to Law (1932) and Mangvungh (1990), Sopāra is a large village in the Bassein [now Vasa or Wasai] sub-division of the Ṭhāna district, 6.5 km [4 mi] away from Bassein itself, 59.5 km [37 mi] north of Bombay, 6.5 km [4 mi] southwest of the Virar station on the Baroda railway.<sup>61</sup> Wasai was the Baçaim of the Portuguese, and was for many centuries the chief city of the Koṅkan. In ancient times, vessels could reach it from the sea (which has now receded), and it is a prosperous town of some 1700 inhabitants.

According to the Commentaries, the distance between Sāvathī and Suppāraka is 130 yojanas (MA 5:90) or 120 yojanas (DhA 2:213). Scholars generally take a yojana to be about 11.25 km (7 mi). The

<sup>53</sup> *Duggatim nābhijānāmi tanukicass'idaṃ phalaṃ.*

<sup>54</sup> These last 3 stanzas are stock and occur in most of the Apadānas, though not always in the same order.

<sup>55</sup> "The three true knowledges," *te, vijjā*, ie, the 3 knowledges of the arhat, viz, the knowledge of the recollection of past lives, the divine eye (knowledge of the arising and passing away of beings according to their karma), and the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes. On "influxes" (*āsava*), see Intro (2) verse 12 n.

<sup>56</sup> "The four analytical skills," *cattāro paṭisambhidā*, are viz: (1) discrimination of meanings, or analytic insight of consequences (*attha, paṭisambhidā*); (2) discrimination of ideas, or analytic insight of origins (*dhmma, paṭisambhidā*); (3) discrimination of language, or analytic insight of language (*nirutti, paṭisambhidā*); and (3) discrimination of ready wit, or creative insight (*paṭibhāṇa, paṭisambhidā*) (A 2:160; Pm 1:119; Vbh 294). Mahā Koṭṭhita is declared by the Buddha as the foremost of the monks with these skills, while the poet monk, Vaṅgīsa is the foremost of the monks in *paṭibhāṇa* (A 1:24).

<sup>57</sup> The "eight liberations" (*aṭṭha vimokkha*) includes spiritual release through the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless attainments, and the attainment of cessation. All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration (or both, as in Sāriputta's case). They are either "liberated of mind," *ceto, vimutti* (ie, liberated by concentration, ie through the destruction of the mental hindrances), or "liberated by wisdom," *paññā, vimutti* (liberated through insight) (A 1:60). One who is "liberated by wisdom" "may not have reached the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*) in his own body, but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed" (M 70.16/1:478). Those who can attain **the 8 liberations** are called "liberated both ways," that is, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are "liberated both ways" (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*). The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 2:70 f) and **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 1:477 f). For full list of the 8 deliverances, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.17.35/2:70 f) = SD 5.17, also (10). See also D 3:262, 228; **Vimokkha S**, A 8.66/4:306; also M 120.37/3:103 = SD 3.4.37.

<sup>58</sup> "The six direct knowledges," *cha-ḷ-abhiñña*, are the spiritual powers of those arhats with full attainments, viz: (1) psychic powers; (2) the divine ear (clairaudience); (3) mind-reading (telepathy); (4) recollection of past lives (retrocognition); (5) the divine eye (the knowledge of the passing away and re-arising of beings); (6) the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes (D A 3:280; 3:281). On "influxes" (*āsava*), see fn on v15b here. For defs see **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.87-96/2:78-85) = SD 8.10 & **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 13.55-66) = SD 1.7.

<sup>59</sup> Also called Aparanta or Aparantaka = Skt Aparānta or Aparāntaka resp.

<sup>60</sup> Lat 19° 25' N, long 72° 47' E. Greek: Suppara (*Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* §52; Ptolemy 7.1.6), Soparagas; Prakrit & modern: Sopāra. See Lamotte 1988a:300.

<sup>61</sup> Law 1932:58; Mangvungh 1990:31.

modern India map shows the distance between the two places to be about 1500 km (900 mi).<sup>62</sup> From the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE or perhaps earlier an active trade-route ran southwest from Sāvattthī and other centres in the central Ganges basin to Suppāraka on the west coast. There are Asokan inscriptions in several cities along this route and in Suppāraka, too (as noted above).<sup>63</sup>

Map: India during the Magadha hegemony, c560-c325 BCE



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Sopāra is alluded to in the Mahabharata as a very holy place. It is also mentioned in other old Sanskrit works, and in cave inscriptions at Karli and Nasik (1st and 2nd centuries). Excavations in 1882 by JM Campbell<sup>64</sup> and Pandit Indraji Bhagwanlal uncovered a number of Buddhist relics. The earliest historical evidence from Sopara (Suppāraka), going back to around 250 BCE, are fragments of Asoka’s Major Rock Edicts VIII<sup>65</sup> and IX.<sup>66</sup>

Sunāparantaka is called Aparānta in Asoka’s Fifth Rock Edict. The Arthaśāstra (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) mentions the fine cotton cloth produced in Aparānta.<sup>67</sup> The Sinhalese chronicles, **the Dīpavaṃsa**<sup>68</sup> and

<sup>62</sup> Cf Basham 1967:503 f; Kosambi 1970:161.

<sup>63</sup> Thapar 1961:228, 236. Hirakawa 1990:77.

<sup>64</sup> See *Bombay Gazetteer*, xiv.314:C342; xvi.125.

<sup>65</sup> This is a basalt fragment bearing a small section of the edict.

<sup>66</sup> DC Sircar, 1975:33; Ray, 1986:60.

<sup>67</sup> Arthaśāstra 2.11.90. *The Kauṣīlīya Arthaśāstra*, ed & tr RP Kangle, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Bombay, 1965-72. Repr Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988.

<sup>68</sup> *The Dīpavaṃsa: An ancient Buddhist historical record*, ed & tr Hermann Oldenberg. London: Williams & Norgate, 1879. 22 chs. Written c 350 CE.

the Mahāvamsa,<sup>69</sup> say that during Asoka's reign, after the Pāṭali,putra council, the elder Moggali,putta Tissa sent the Greek (*yonaka*) monk, **Yonaka Dhamma,rakkhita**, to spread the Dharma in Aparanta.<sup>70</sup> All this clearly shows that Suppāraka had been an important centre even before that time.

According to Lamotte, in a narrow sense, **Aparānta(ka)** refers to northern Koṅkan, its capital being Śūrpāraka, but in a wider sense, Aparānta is a synonym of Paścāddeśa, designating the whole western coast, Sindh, Western Rājputāna, Kutch, Gujarāt and the coastal area of the lower Narmadā (1988a:300).

The Sinhalese chronicles relate how king Siha,bahu (in India) of Lāḷa,raṭṭha (Skt Lāḷa,raṣṭra) exiled prince Vijaya and 700 others (because of his evil conduct), with their heads half-shaven. They landed in Suppāraka, but had to leave because of the other men's violence. They were said to have arrived in Lanka on the day of the Buddha's parinirvana.<sup>71</sup> BC Law thinks that Lāḷa,raṣṭra "is evidently identical with the old Lāta kingdom of Gujerat, the Larike of Ptolemy (p38)" (1932:58).

The name of Sopāra (ancient Suppāraka) is one of those possibly connected, through Sophir (the Coptic name of India) with the Ophir of the Bible. Some Arab writers called it the Sofala of India. **The Apadāna** and **the Jātakas** mention an established trade-route between Suppāraka and Suvaṇṇa,bhūmi (Skt Suvarṇa,bhūmi), which has been identified with modern Myanmar and/or peninsular Malaysia.<sup>72</sup>

## 4 Teachings connected with Puṇṇa

**4.1 The four noble truths.** The Commentaries to the two suttas relating to Puṇṇa—M 245 and S 35.88—both say that this sutta is an expression of the first two of the four noble truths, that is, suffering and the arising of suffering. Delight (nandi) is an aspect of craving. Through the arising of delight regarding the eye and forms, and so on, there arises the suffering of the five aggregates.<sup>73</sup> However, on carefully examining the sutta, we find that the other two noble truths are also expounded here.

The Buddha, in the first part of his advice to Puṇṇa [§3], teaches on the first two truths, that is, suffering and its arising, as they occur through the six senses. In the second part [§4], he teaches the ending of suffering by way of the two middle truths, that is, the ending and the path, shown as the abandoning of delight in the six senses and their objects.

**4.2 A "graduated scale of ill-treatment."** The climax of the Puṇṇa story in the suttas is clearly when he informs the Buddha of his wish to return to Sunāparanta to spread the Dharma, and the Buddha examines him to see if he is really ready to do so. The Buddha tests Puṇṇa if he is ready for face what FL Woodward<sup>74</sup> calls the "graduated scale of ill-treatment" [§5]. Puṇṇa is made aware of what may lie in store for him when he returns to Sunāparanta where the people are fierce and rough. Such people might scold or insult him; hit him with clods of earth; or with a rod; or attack him with a sharp weapon; or even take his life. His reply to the Buddha's final question shows his total readiness for his mission:

Bhante, if the people of Sunāparanta were to take my life with a sharp knife, then I shall think thus: "There have been disciples of the Blessed One, who being repelled and disgusted by the

<sup>69</sup> Mahāvamsa, ed Wilhelm Geiger, *The Mahāvamsa*, London: Pali Text Society, 1908. *The Great Chronicle of Ceylon (Mahāvamsa)*, tr W Geiger & Mabel H Bode, London: Pali Text Society, 1912. Chs 1-37 Mahāvamsa; chs 38-101 Cūlavamsa. The work is composite and dates btw 8<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cent.

<sup>70</sup> Dīpv 8.7; Mahv 12.5. This, however, is not confirmed in the literature of other Buddhist schools. See also Lamotte 1988a:298, 302.

<sup>71</sup> Dīpv 9.15 ff; Mahv 6.46 f. For other historical Buddhist background of Suppāraka, see: S Nagaraju 1981:334; Ray 1986:15-17; Mungvagh 1990 esp 32 f. For a useful summary, see Tatelman 2000:1-3 (however, he errs in saying that Dīpv and Mahv record that "it was from Suppāraka that Prince Vijaya, during the reign of Aśoka, led the first settlers from India to Sri Lanka," 2000:1; this was actually during the Buddha's time: see above.)

<sup>72</sup> **Bāhiya Ap** (Ap 533.13-15/2:476); **Sussondi J** (J 3360:188) mentions trade btw Bhārukaccha (modern Broach, 241 km (150 mi) north of Suppāraka) and Suvaṇṇa,bhūmi = Suvaṇṇa,dīpa (Skt Suvarṇa,dvīpa). See Lamotte 1988a:300; Karttunen 1997:250, 345. On early Indian trade in SE Asia, see Glover 1996.

<sup>73</sup> MA 5:84; SA 2273.

<sup>74</sup> S:W 4:35 n2.

body and by life, have resorted to a knife-bringer.<sup>75</sup> But I have not sought the knife: it is the knife that has sought me!” Thus will I then think of them, Blessed One; thus will I then think of them, Sugata [well-gone one]. (M 145.5/3:268)

The graduated scale of ill-treatment is not unique to the Puṇṇa story. In fact, it is presented in a more dramatic context of **the Kakacūpama Sutta**, “the Discourse on the Parable of the Saw” (M 21), where the Buddha exhorts the monk Moliya Phaggunā, who is so overly attached to the nuns that he feels upset when anyone speaks ill of them.

Phaggunā, if anyone were to speak ill of the nuns...you should abandon any desire based on the household life, or any thought based on the household life...

Phaggunā, if anyone were to give you a blow with his hand, with clods of earth, with a rod, or with a knife, you should abandon any desire based on the household life, or any thought based on the household life. And here you should train yourself thus:

“My mind will be unaffected, and I shall utter no evil words; and I shall dwell compassionate for his wellbeing, with a mind of lovingkindness, without inner hate.”

This, Phaggunā, is how you should train yourself. (M 21.6/1:123 f) = SD 38.1

Sadly, however, in this case, it appears that Phaggunā is unmoved by the Buddha’s admonition or feels that he has failed in the training; for it is reported that he returns to lay life (S 12.32/2:50).<sup>76</sup>

**4.3 Puṇṇa’s Thera,gāthā.** From what we know of Puṇṇa of Sunāparanta, his prominent qualities appear to be humility, diligence and self-sacrifice. According to the Pūrṇavadāna, even

as a layman, he is an obedient and uncomplaining son and younger brother. As a monk, the Buddha commends him for his “patient forbearance” (*kṣānti*) which, when confronted by the hunter, he proceeds to demonstrate in practice. He further demonstrates these qualities by rescuing his brother’s trading expedition and reconciling the members of his family...

...all alone, far from “civilized” Śrāvastī and from his teachers and fellow monks, Pūrṇa not only achieves arhatship, the supreme goal of the religious life, but converts the rude rustics to the Buddhadharma and prepares the way for the evangelization of the capital city itself.

(Tatelman 2000:149)

The monk Puṇṇa gains prominence regarding diligence in his duties and moral virtue, as reflected in his only **Thera,gāthā** (Tha 70), found in **the Eka Nipāta**, “the collection of ones,” that runs thus:

**70** *Sīlam eva idha aggam  
paññāvā pana uttamo  
manussena ca devesu  
sīla,paññāṇato jayan ti*

Moral virtue is indeed foremost here,  
But the wise is supreme  
Amongst humans and the divine,  
Victorious on account of virtue and wisdom.

(Tha 70 = Sīlava Thera,gāthā, Tha 619)<sup>77</sup>

**4.4 Māna,kāma Sutta (S 15 f).** The Saṃyutta Commentary (SA 1:26) on **the Māna,kāma Sutta** (S 15 f), quotes the Buddha’s praise of Puṇṇa in the Puṇṇ’ovāda Sutta and the (Sunāparanta) Puṇṇa Sutta, thus: “Endowed with such discipline and stillness, you will be able to dwell in the country called Sunā-

<sup>75</sup> *Santi kho Bhagavato sāvaka kāyena ca jīvitena ca aṭṭiyamānā jigucchamānā yeva sattha,hārakam pariyesanti.* I have rendered *sattha,hāra* literally as “knife-bringer,” referring to someone who provides the opportunity for suicide, rather than the more specific “assassin,” as sometimes tr. This passage alludes to the strange case of the suicide monks (V 3:68-70; S 54.9/5:320-322): cf S:B 1951 nn299, 301. However, cf Pārājika 3 (V 3:73) which MA 5:85 cites. See **Chann’ovāda S** (M 114) = SD 11.12.

<sup>76</sup> For another case where the Buddha give teachings even though his audience is not converted, see **Udumbarikā Sihanāda S** (D 25/3:36-57) = SD 1.4. See also **Moliya Phaggunā S** (S 2.12/2:12-14) = SD 20.5.

<sup>77</sup> See Tha:N 139 n70 for philological discussion.

paranta" [§6], and quotes him as an example of "enduring patience" (*adhivāsana, khanti*), as reflected in the Māna, kāma Sutta (given here in full):

## Māna, kāma Sutta

### The Discourse on the Fondness for Conceit

(S 15 f/1.9/1:4)

At Sāvattihī.

Standing at one side, the devata spoke this verse before the Blessed One:

<p><b>15</b> <i>Na māna, kāmassa damo idh'atthi na monam atthi asamāhitassa eko araṇṇe viharaṃ pamatto na maccudheyassa tareyya pāraṇ ti</i></p>	<p>There is no taming here for one fond of conceit, Nor wisdom of silence for one unfocussed. Dwelling alone in the forest, heedless, One would not cross beyond Death's realm.</p>
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[The Blessed One:]

<p><b>16</b> <i>Mānam pahāya susamāhitatto sucetaso sabbadhi vippamutto eko araṇṇe viharaṃ appamatto sa maccudheyassa tareyya pāraṇ ti</i></p>	<p>Having given up conceit,<sup>78</sup> with mind well-focussed, With wholesome mind, is everywhere released. Dwelling alone in the forest, heedful, One would cross beyond Death's realm.</p>
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— — —

Here the "wisdom of silence" (*mona*) or sagehood is an important teaching in pre-coenobitical early Buddhism (during the first twenty years before the Sangha became more settled in monasteries), a life-style and wisdom reflected in such suttas as **the Khagga, visāṇa Sutta** (Sn 1.3)<sup>79</sup> and **the Muni Sutta** (Sn 1.12).<sup>80</sup> This sagely silence includes not only the "noble silence" (*ariya tuṇhī, bhāva*) of meditation<sup>81</sup> but, more importantly, the truth that ultimately reality cannot be adequately expressed in any language. The reason is clear: The word is not the thing.<sup>82</sup>

## 5 Scripture as literature

**5.1 Sources of the Pūrṇa story.** Joel Tatelman, a Canadian scholar of Buddhist literature, has done a critical translation and comparative study of **the Pūrṇāvadāna** in *The Glorious Deeds of Pūrṇa* (2000). The most elaborate account of Pūrṇa's career is found in the Bhaiṣajya, vastu (the chapter of medicines) of the Mūla, sarvāsti, vāda **Vinaya Piṭaka**, preserved in the Tibetan canon.<sup>83</sup> Pūrṇa's story also

<sup>78</sup> See **Pubba Sambodha S 1** (S 35.13) = SD 14.9 Intro (3).

<sup>79</sup> Sn 35-75/1.3.

<sup>80</sup> Sn 207-221/1.12.

<sup>81</sup> "The noble silence" (*ariya, tuṇhī, bhāva*) is a name for the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyanas, says **Kolita S** (S 2:273), because with-in it initial thought and sustained thought (thinking and pondering) (*vitakka, vicāra*) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur. In **Kāmaabhū S 2** (S 4:293) *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called verbal formation (*vacī, sankhāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech. Comy on **Ariyapariyesana S** (M 26.4/1:161) says that those who cannot attain dhyana are advised to maintain "noble silence" by attending to their basic meditation subject (MA 2:169). See SD 1.11.

<sup>82</sup> On the nature of religious language, see SD 10.6.

<sup>83</sup> See **Dulva**, Derge ed, vols ka, folia 295b4-310b7 & kha, folia 2a1-8a3; Beijing ed vols 41 (khe), folia 276a ff & 41 (ge), folia 1a-6b.

occurs in the **Divyāvādāna**, of which there are several variant manuscripts. Yutaka Iwamoto notices that there are only seven stories which are common to all of them, and that, of these, only two—the Koṭi, -karnāvādāna and the Pūrṇāvādāna—always occur as the first two stories.<sup>84</sup>

In *The Glorious Deeds of Pūrṇa* (2000), Tatelman also makes a comparative study of the Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta (2000:124-134) and, in his Appendices, provides a translation of the following ancillary texts to the Sutta:

the Majjhima Commentary	MA 5:85,22-92,17	(2000:180-187)
the Puṇṇa Thera,gāthā Commentary <sup>85</sup>	ThaA 1:167-169	(2000:188-191)
the Pūrṇāvādāna	Bodhisattvāvādāna,kalpa,latā 36	(2000:192-199)
the Mo-ho-seng-ch'i lū <sup>86</sup>	T1425.23 = T22.415a29-416a21	(2000:200-205)

Tatelman also notes the closeness of the Pūrṇāvādāna (from the Divyāvādāna) and the Pali version:

As we have seen [2000:14-16, 60-63], the description of Pūrṇa's instruction by the Buddha and the subsequent account of the former's return to Śroṇāparāntaka [2000:63 ff] are in fact Mūlasarvāstivādin recensions of the better-known Theravādin texts, the Puṇṇovāda-sutta and Puṇṇa-sutta.<sup>87</sup>

While the second half of the Pūrṇāvādāna abounds in stereotyped phrases and passages taken from canonical sources, this episode, placed squarely in the middle of the narrative, functions as its “canonical core,” validating, for readers mindful of the scriptural tradition, the story as a whole.

And in terms of textual history, this sūtra bears the same relation to the rest of the Pūrṇāvādāna as the Pāli Puṇṇovāda-sutta does to the Puṇṇovādasutta-vaṇṇanā, its commentary.

(Tatelman, 2000:124; slightly edited)

**5.2 Jain parallel.** Scholars<sup>88</sup> have noted that a description on patience similar to the one given in the Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta is found in the Jain text, **the Isibhāsiyāim**, where one is exhorted to show patience when faced with abuse by reflecting that one is fortunate not to be physically attacked.<sup>89</sup> Following a “graduated scale of ill-treatment” [4.2] similar to that of the Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta, the Isibhāsiyāim speaks of one's being attacked with fists and sticks, with knives, and finally being killed. Should one be killed, the Isibhāsiyāim exhorts that one should reflect that at least one is not made to fall away from the Dharma.<sup>90</sup> **Analayo**, in *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, makes this evaluation:

The similarity between these two passages is noteworthy, as they proceed through very similar reflections. What is perhaps even more noteworthy is that their respective culmination points differ in ways that seem to be the exact opposite of what one would have expected of these two traditions.

<sup>84</sup> Iwamoto, in fact, defines Divy as a collection of Skt avadānas the first two stories of which are the Koṭi,karnāvādāna and the Pūrṇāvādāna: see 1978:143-148, esp 143, 148. See also Tatelman 2000:12 f for a brief survey.

<sup>85</sup> Tatelman uses ThaA (Nālandā ed Chaudhary) 1976:1:228,7-231,16 which incorporates Ap 2:341.

<sup>86</sup> This Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya text is a composite narrative conflating: (1) the traditional account of Anāthapiṇḍada's first meeting with the Buddha, his conversion and donation of the Jeta,vana monastery with (2) the story of Śroṇa Koṭikarṇa's visit to the Buddha to which are added (3) elements of the Pūrṇa-legend found in Pūrṇāvādāna. Parallel sources: V 2:154-159 (Cv 6.4.1-10). Mūla,sarvāstivāda **Śaya'āsana,vastu** (ed Gnoli 1977-78) 14-16; given verbatim in **Saṅgha,bheda,vastu** (ed Gnoli 1977-78) 1:166 ff; (3) **Divyāvādāna** 1. Lévi (1915) has studied all the V versions; additional biblio discussion, Lamotte 1944-80 1:546-547 n3. Only the Mahāsaṅghika account combines these 3 narrative elements, which elsewhere form discrete accounts. (Based on Tatelman's fn.)

<sup>87</sup> M 3:267-270; S 4:60-63.

<sup>88</sup> Eg Hajime Nakamura 1983:306.

<sup>89</sup> Isibhāsiyāim ch 34. See Walter Schubring, *Isibhāsiyāim, Aussprüche der Weiser. Aus dem Prākṛit der Jainas übersetzt*. Hamburg: De Gruyter, 1969:538.

<sup>90</sup> Schubring 1969:538,32: *diṭṭhā me esa bāle jīvitāo vavaroveti, ṇo dhammāo bhāmseti.*

Whereas the Pāli version confronts the prospect of being killed with the thought that this will be easier than having to commit suicide, according to the Jaina text in such a situation one can find consolation in being steadfastly established in the Dhamma. As ritual suicide was considered an expression of spiritual perfection in the Jaina tradition,<sup>91</sup> one would have expected the Isibhāsīyāim to bring up the topic of suicide and perhaps its Buddhist counterpart to speak of remaining steadfast in the Dhamma. (Analayo 2006 ad M 3:268)

**5.3 Narrative paintings.** The popularity of the Pūrṇa story is further attested by detailed narrative mural paintings of what seems to be the Pūrṇa account as found in the Mūla,sarvāsti,vāda Vinaya and the Divyāvādāna. These narrative paintings are found in the cave monasteries of **Ajaṇṭā** (located probably in ancient Sunāparantaka itself) (late 5<sup>th</sup> century), and from **Kizil** (Qizil) in Central Asia (late 6<sup>th</sup> century). These paintings have been more certainly dated than the literary sources.<sup>92</sup>



Qizil in Central Asia

From: <http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/maps/cenasia.html>

**Ajaṇṭā**,<sup>93</sup> in Aurangābād district, Mahārashtra state, western India, is the site of the world-renowned rock-cut Buddhist caves, hewn out of granite cliffs on the inner side of a 22-m (70-ft) high ravine in the Wagurna River Valley, 106 km (66 mi) northeast of Aurangābād, and about 7 km (4.3 mi) from the ancient village of Ajaṇṭā, which can be reached by bus or by train. Caves 1 and 2 have ceilings that are divided into dozens of bands. Both have similar features: a seated Buddha in the teaching gesture. From the main columnar hall are found small monastic cells. Jātaka tales are painted around the walls. Arranged clockwise are scenes from the Hamsa Jātaka (J 502), the Vidhura Paṇḍita Jātaka (J 545), the conversion

<sup>91</sup> Bronkhorst 1993:36 explains the early Jaina conception of the way to liberation in the following manner: “Activity being the source of all unhappiness, the attempt is made up to stop activity. This is done in a most radical way. The monk abstains from food and prepares for death in a position which is as motionless as possible.”

<sup>92</sup> Schlingloff 1989 & 1991.

<sup>93</sup> 20°22' N, 75°42' E. See Piya Tan, “Buddhism India” in *History of Buddhism* (2005 §20) for pictures.

of Pūrṇa, and the rescue of Pūrṇa's brother from the shipwreck.<sup>94</sup> Cave 2 was painted slightly later than Cave 1 and is smaller.

**Qizil or Kizil**, near the town of Kucha, contains the largest surviving cave complex in Chinese Central Asia today, containing a set of 236 Buddhist caves (of which 135 are relatively intact) located 75 km (46.6 mi) northwest of Kucha, on the northern bank of the Muzat River, in Baicheng County, Xinjiang province, China. The decorated cave temples represent the highest achievement of Central Asian art during the period. The grandeur of Qizil is comparable to other great Buddhist cave sites in China, such as the Dunhuang Caves in Gansu Province, and the Longmen Caves in Henan Province.<sup>95</sup>

It is noteworthy that while these cave murals and frescoes prominently represent women in various social and religious roles, they are, in the Pūrṇāvadāna presented, observes **Tatelman**, as

the stereotype of petty, jealous, ambitious wives manipulating their weak, feckless husbands. At the same time, the husbands, Bhavatrāta and Bhavanandin, who according to this same stereotype have authority over their wives, are, if anything, more culpable, for they are serving their own greed and jealousy as much as deferring to their wives. . .

Comparing the text of the Pūrṇāvadāna with the Pūrṇāvadāna in art raises the issues which are not unrelated. It is notable that the frescoes at Ajañṭā, quite near the site of ancient Sūrparaka, and those at Kizil in Central Asia, feature women far more prominently than the narratives that inspired them.<sup>96</sup>

Is it significant that the paintings date from the fifth and sixth centuries while our text is as old as the first? Are these striking differences purely or largely a function of the different artistic media? Or is it that the painters—who may not have been monastics—portray aspects of Buddhist (and Indian) culture which monastic authors writing in Sanskrit de-emphasized or ignored?

(Tatelman 2000:169 f)

**5.4 Importance of stories.** The two cores of the Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta (M 145) and the Puṇṇa Sutta (S 35.88), in other words, also form the core of the Pūrṇāvadāna, which essentially and dramatically expands on them for the “edutainment” (education and entertainment) of the masses (which is after all the original purpose of the Apadāna and Avādāna literatures). Tatelman continues,

However, what is important for our purposes is that this episode, taken more or less verbatim from the canon, functions as an integral part of the narrative. The dialogue naturally divides into two parts: in the first [2000:60-62], Pūrṇa receives instruction in non-attachment to sensory experience as a primary method of attaining Nirvāṇa; in the second [2000:62-63], the Buddha tests the extent to which his disciple has developed the quality of patient forbearance (*ksānti*) and finding this sufficiently well developed, permits him to return from Śrāvastī to his narrative land, where his success as a missionary is dramatized. (Tatelman 2000:63 f; emphases added)

The account of Puṇṇa as presented in the Suttas—the Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta (M 145) and the Puṇṇa Sutta (S 35-84)—is a conventional Buddhist story showing, in essential terms, the awakening of a true disciple. Puṇṇa is presented in the suttas as a Buddhist missionary par excellence, that is, one who is willing even to risk his own life if necessary and whose spirituality attracts others to the spiritual life. It is from the lives and deeds of such saints that hagiography and religious literature rise. The acts of such saints may be simple piety and a pure labour of faith and love, but such simple pious tales grow, like modern fiction, into rich stories of faith and fantasy that will forever hold the listener's attention and surely inspire him in the spiritual life.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> For current information & travel, see <http://www.indyahills.com/maharashtra/ajanta.html> & <http://asi.nic.in/-ajantacaves.html>.

<sup>95</sup> For current information & travel, see <http://www.asia.si.edu/exhibitions/online/cave/default.htm>, <http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/xinjiang/korla/Kizil.htm> & <http://www.showcaves.com/english/en/misc/Kizil.html>.

<sup>96</sup> See Yadzani 1933: II 45-59 with plates XLII-XLIV; Schlingloff 1989, 1991, esp fig 3 scene 6.

<sup>97</sup> See Tatelman 2000:169-171.

As such, they are not mere entertaining stories but life-changing devices. Without the person of the living Buddha to guide and inspire them, later Buddhists—through the power of their faith, meditation and imagination—embellish the simple spirituality of the awakened saints into a mythology of cosmic proportions. The faithful of all religions have found this mythologizing tendency irresistible, simply because they see something more than their own life and this world in such saints: they see in them the possibility of the world beyond and spiritual liberation. All this has been clearly noticed by scholars of religion such as **Joel Tatelman**, who says:

The Pūrṇāvadāna is in many ways a highly conventional tale. Its first, “secular” half is composed in a simple folk-tale style; its second, “religious” half is replete with stock descriptions and quotations from other Buddhist texts. It is nevertheless a complex literary work which employs many of the same artful strategies of language and composition associated with the classics of Western literature and, more recently, with Biblical narrative. If this is accepted, even if its possibility is admitted, the procedure becomes straightforward (though not necessarily simple or easy): a literary work requires literary analysis. And that same kind of analysis may be applied to other Buddhist narrative works or episodes: other *avadānas*, the often closely-related stories found in the Pāli commentaries, and a variety of *sūtras*, both mainstream and Mahāyāna. As [Mark R] Woodward has shown for the Theravādin tradition, narrative does not, as many scholars have hitherto assumed, functioned as a “popular” substitute for the doctrinal and philosophical: the two modes reciprocally constitute and validate each other.<sup>98</sup> (Tatelman 2000:172)

This wealth of texts about Puṇṇa (Skt Pūrṇa) attests to his importance as a Buddhist saint. In the Concluding Remarks of *The Glorious Deeds of Pūrṇa*, Tatelman notes the developments in scholarly interest in Buddhist narrative,<sup>99</sup> and mentions a special journal on *Buddhist Literature*.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Mark R Woodward, 1997.

<sup>99</sup> See Tatelman 2000:171. These titles are listed in the Bibliography.

<sup>100</sup> *Buddhist Literature*, an annual journal devoted to the translation of Buddhist Literature into English), editor-in-chief, Jan Nattier, 1999, 2000. Indiana University, East Asian Studies Center-Buddhist Literature, Memorial Hall West 207, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA. [http://www.indiana.edu/~easc/journals/b\\_literature/](http://www.indiana.edu/~easc/journals/b_literature/)

## The Discourse on the Advice to Puṇṇa

(M 145/3:267-270 □ S 35.88/4:60-63)

[267]

1 Thus have I heard.

### Brief word of advice

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika's Park in Jeta, vana near Sāvattihī.

Then the venerable Puṇṇa, having emerged from his evening retreat approached the Blessed One.

Having approached the Blessed One, he saluted him and sat down at one side.

Seated thus at one side, the venerable Puṇṇa said this to the Blessed One:

2 “It would be good, bhante, if the Blessed One were to give me a brief word of advice. Having heard the Dharma from the Blessed One, I will dwell alone, aloof (from society), heedful, exertive, and resolute.”

“In that case, Puṇṇa, listen, pay close attention; I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante,” the venerable Puṇṇa answered the Blessed One in assent.

### The six sensual strands<sup>101</sup>

The Blessed One said this:

3 HOW SUFFERING ARISES.

(1) “Puṇṇa, there are forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights in them, welcomes them, and remains holding on to them, delight arises in him.

**Puṇṇa, with the arising of delight there is the arising of suffering, I say!**<sup>102</sup>

(2) Puṇṇa, there are sounds cognizable by the ear that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights in them, welcomes them, and remains holding on to them, delight arises in him.

Puṇṇa, with the arising of delight there is the arising of suffering, I say!

(3) Puṇṇa, there are smells cognizable by the nose that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights in them, welcomes them, and remains holding on to them, delight arises in him.

Puṇṇa, with the arising of delight there is the arising of suffering, I say!

(4) Puṇṇa, there are tastes cognizable by the tongue that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights in them, welcomes them, and remains holding on to them, delight arises in him.

Puṇṇa, with the arising of delight there is the arising of suffering, I say!

(5) Puṇṇa, there are touches cognizable by the body that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights in them, welcomes them, and remains holding on to them, delight arises in him.

Puṇṇa, with the arising of delight there is the arising of suffering, I say!

<sup>101</sup> This same teaching [§§3-4] is given to Miga,jāla, as a result of which he becomes an arhat (**Miga,jāla S 2, S 35.64/4:38**). The first 5 are known as “sensual strands” (*kāma,guṇa*), mentioned in **Araṇa,vibhaṅga S** (M 139.9a/-3:233) = SD 7.8. *Kāma,guṇa* is also tr as “strand(s) of sensual pleasure.” Here all 6 are given as “sensual strands,” delighting in which bring about suffering.

<sup>102</sup> This is the sutta's key statement. MA says that this is a brief exposition of the 4 noble truths. Delight (*nandī*) here refers to craving: with the arising of delight in sense-object arising in the sense-faculty, there arises the suffering of the 4 aggregates. Thus in this first part of the teaching (§3) the Buddha expounds the first 2 truths: suffering and its arising, as they occur through the six senses. In the second part (§4), the Buddha expounds the ending of the round of existence by way of the latter two truths: the ending and the path, as shown through the abandoning of delight in the six senses and their objects. (MA 5:84)

(6) Puṇṇa, there are mind-objects cognizable by the mind that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights in them, welcomes them, and remains holding on to them, delight arises in him.

Puṇṇa, with the arising of delight there is the arising of suffering, I say!

4 HOW SUFFERING ENDS.

(1) Puṇṇa, there are forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights *not* in them, welcomes them *not*, and remains *not* holding on to them, delight does *not* arise in him.

**Puṇṇa, with the ending of delight there is the ending of suffering, I say!**

(2) Puṇṇa, there are sounds cognizable by the ear that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights *not* in them, welcomes them *not*, and remains *not* holding on to them, delight does *not* arise in him.

Puṇṇa, with the ending of delight there is the ending of suffering, I say!

(3) Puṇṇa, there are smells cognizable by the nose that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights *not* in them, welcomes them *not*, and remains *not* holding on to them, delight does *not* arise in him.

Puṇṇa, with the ending of delight there is the ending of suffering, I say!

(4) Puṇṇa, there are tastes cognizable by the tongue that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights *not* in them, welcomes them *not*, and remains *not* holding on to them, delight does *not* arise in him.

Puṇṇa, with the ending of delight there is the ending of suffering, I say!

(5) Puṇṇa, there are touches cognizable by the body that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust.

If a monk delights *not* in them, welcomes them *not*, and remains *not* holding on to them, delight does *not* arise in him.

Puṇṇa, with the ending of delight there is the ending of suffering, I say!

(6) Puṇṇa, there are mind-objects cognizable by the mind that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, [268] arousing lust.

If a monk delights *not* in them, welcomes them *not*, and remains *not* holding on to them, delight does *not* arise in him.

Puṇṇa, with the ending of delight there is the ending of suffering, I say!

### The missionary's courage

5 Puṇṇa, now that I have given you a word of advice in brief, in which country will you dwell?"

"Bhante, now that the Blessed One has given me the word of advice in brief, I am going to dwell in the country named Sunāparanta."

(1) "Puṇṇa, the people of Sunāparanta are fierce. Puṇṇa, the people of Sunāparanta are rough. If, Puṇṇa, they were to scold you, or were to insult you, what, Puṇṇa, would you then think of them?"

"Bhante, if the people of Sunāparanta were to scold me, or were to insult me, then I shall think thus:

'These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they do not punch me with their fists.'

Thus will I then think of them, Blessed One; thus will I then think of them, Sugata [well-gone one]."

(2) "But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta were to punch you with their fists, what, Puṇṇa, would you then think of them?"

"Bhante, if the people of Sunāparanta were to punch me with their fists, then I shall think thus:

'These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they do not hit me with a clod of earth.'

Thus will I then think of them, Blessed One; thus will I then think of them, Sugata [well-gone one]."

(3) “But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta were to hit you with clods of earth, what, Puṇṇa, would you then think of them?”

“Bhante, if the people of Sunāparanta were to hit me with clods of earth, then I shall think thus:

‘These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they do not hit me with rods.’

Thus will I then think of them, Blessed One; thus will I then think of them, Sugata [well-gone one].”

[269] (4) “But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta were to hit you with rods, what, Puṇṇa, would you then think of them?”

“Bhante, if the people of Sunāparanta were to hit me with rods, then I shall think thus:

‘These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they do not attack me with knives.’

Thus will I then think of them, Blessed One; thus will I then think of them, Sugata [well-gone one].”

(5) “But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta were to attack you with knives, what, Puṇṇa, would you then think of them?”

“Bhante, if the people of Sunāparanta were to attack me with knives, then I shall think thus:

‘These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they do not attack me with *sharp* knives.’

Thus will I then think of them, Blessed One; thus will I then think of them, Sugata [well-gone one].”

(6) “But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta were to attack you with *sharp* knives, what, Puṇṇa, would you then think of them?”

“Bhante, if the people of Sunāparanta were to attack me with sharp knives, then I shall think thus:

‘These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they have not taken my life with sharp knives.’

Thus will I then think of them, Blessed One; thus will I then think of them, Sugata [well-gone one].”

(7) “But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta were to take your life with sharp knives, what, Puṇṇa, would you then think of them?”

“Bhante, if the people of Sunāparanta were to take my life with sharp knives, then I shall think thus:

‘There have been disciples of the Blessed One, who being repelled and disgusted by the body and by life, have resorted to a knife-bringer.<sup>103</sup> **But I have not sought the knife: it is the knife that has sought me!**’

Thus will I then think of them, Blessed One; thus will I then think of them, Sugata [well-gone one].”<sup>104</sup>

6 “Good, good, Puṇṇa! Endowed with such discipline and stillness, you will be able to dwell in the country called Sunāparanta.<sup>105</sup> Please, Puṇṇa, do as you deem fit here.”<sup>106</sup>

### Puṇṇa in Sunāparanta

7 Then, having delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One’s word, the venerable Puṇṇa rose from his seat. Having saluted the Blessed One, he circumambulated<sup>107</sup> him. Then he set his lodging in order, and taking his bowl and robe, set out on his walk towards Sunāparanta country.

<sup>103</sup> *Santi kho Bhagavato sāvakā kāyena ca jīvitena ca aṭṭiyamānā jigucchamānā yeva sattha, hāra kam pariyesanti.* See Intro 3.2 n on “knife-bringer.”

<sup>104</sup> On this “graduated scale of ill-treatment,” see Intro 3.2.

<sup>105</sup> *Sakkhissasi kho tvam Puṇṇa iminā dam’upasamena samannāgato Sunāparantasmim janapade viharitum.* See above Intro (2).

<sup>106</sup> *Yassa dāni tvam Puṇṇa kālam mañāsī ti,* lit “Please do what you think it is now the time to do.” This is stock: **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.103/1:85 = SD 8.10); **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.3.6/2:104 = SD 13), **Sekha S** (M 53.3/1:354 = SD 21.14), **Kaṇṇaka-t, thala S** (M 90.17/2:132 f = SD 10.8); **Puṇṇ’ovāda S** (M 145.6/3:269 = S 35.88/4:62,31 = SD 20.15), **Avassuta S** (S 35.243/4:183,15,30), **Khemā Therī S** (S 44.1/4:379,29), **Vesālī S** (S 54.9/5:321,16,17) & **Thapatayā S** (S 55.6/5:348,27). See Joy Manné, “On a departure formula and its translation,” *Buddhist Studies Review* 10, 1993:27-43.

<sup>107</sup> *Pada-k, khinam katvā,* ie keeping his right shoulder to the Buddha, he move clockwise (sunwise) around the Buddha and departs.

Wandering by stages (on a teaching tour),<sup>108</sup> he eventually arrived in Sunāparanta country. And there the venerable Puṇṇa lived in Sunāparanta country.

Then, during the rains, the venerable Puṇṇa established five hundred laymen and five hundred laywomen in the practice, and he himself realized the three knowledges.<sup>109</sup> In due course, the venerable Puṇṇa attained final nirvana.<sup>110</sup>

**8** Then a number of monks approached the Blessed One, and saluted him. Having saluted him, they sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, they said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, the clansman<sup>111</sup> Puṇṇa, who [270] was given a word of advice in brief by the Blessed One, has died. What is his destination? What is his future course?”

“Bhikshus, the clansman Puṇṇa was wise. He practised in accordance with the Dharma and did not trouble me in the ministering of the Dharma. The clansman Puṇṇa has attained final nirvana.”

The Blessed One said this. The monks joyfully approved of the Blessed One's word.

— evaṃ —

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<sup>108</sup> “Touring...by stages,” *cārikāṃ caramāno*, lit “walking the walk,” that is, wandering about teaching the Dharma and ministering the people. See n ad loc in **Tevijja S** (D 13.1/1:235) = SD 1.8.

<sup>109</sup> On the three knowledges, see Intro (2) under Ap v15 n.

<sup>110</sup> MA says that after Puṇṇa dies, the people venerated his remains for a week, and then building for it a pyre of scented wood, cremated it, and after then built a caitya (reliquary shrine or cairn) over the ashes (relics) (MA 5:92).

<sup>111</sup> At this point, the Sutta still refers to Puṇṇa as *kula,putta* (noble youth), who probably dies young, and within a short time of his return to Sunāparanta. The texts do not say how he dies, except that he dies during his first rains retreat there (S 35.88/4:63).

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