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A Condemned Saint: Devadatta

Devadatta³⁰ appears prominently in the Nikāya texts as the Buddha's cousin and archrival, who consistently competes with the Blessed One and tries to overthrow him. As depicted in his legends, Devadatta is, in fact, an inveterate evildoer who is driven by ambitious and hateful intentions and performs a variety of pernicious deeds. Thus he tries, at various times, to supplant the Buddha, to bring the *saṃgha* to ruin, and even to kill the master through one or another diabolical scheme. Referring to Devadatta, Rockhill rightly remarks that "his name became in later times synonymous with everything that is bad, the object of the hatred of all believers."^a

But the portrait of Devadatta as an evildoer is, within the Indian Buddhist corpus, not entirely consistent. In fact, there are indications, however slight, of another, quite different Devadatta, an impeccable saint whose sanctity is acknowledged by other Buddhist saints, including Śāriputra and even the Buddha himself. In the *vinaya* of the Sarvāstivāda, for example, we learn that for twelve years following his admission into the order, Devadatta conducts himself with faultless deeds and thoughts. He reads and recites the *sūtras*, lives according to proper discipline, and strives in his practice of the dharma; in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* Devadatta reveals himself as one who has the right view and can preach the correct doctrine.^b Little wonder, then, that Śāriputra praises Devadatta for his saintliness: "Godhi's son is of great psychic power, Godhi's son is of great majesty,"^c a praise that the Buddha affirms is spoken with truth.³¹

The theme of Devadatta's saintliness is affirmed in the *Udāna*, where it is the Buddha who praises him. Devadatta is mentioned as a Buddhist saint among other great Buddhist saints. In this account, eleven saints approach the Buddha, Devadatta and ten others — including the greatest disciples of the Buddha, listed, in the Pāli, as (1) Sāriputta, (2) Mahāmoggallāna, (3) Mahākassapa, (4) Mahākaccāyana, (5) Mahākotṭhita, (6) Mahākappina, (7) Mahācunda, (8) Anruddha, (9) Revata, and

³⁰ On Devadatta, see particularly Mukherjee's analysis of the corpus of legends surrounding this saint (1966) and Bareau's discussion of the early material (1988-89). See also Frauwallner 1956, 117-19, Lamotte 1958, 19-20, 69-70, 374, 572, and 728-29, Bareau 1959, 357-58, Waldschmidt 1964, and Lamotte 1980, 868-78.

³¹ It is not always Śāriputra who has this role. In a Sanskrit fragment of the *vinaya* of the Sarvāstivāda found in Chinese Turkistan, it is Ānanda who makes this praise. (See Waldschmidt 1964, 553ff.)

(11) Ānanda; Devadatta is tenth in this list, between Revata and Ānanda.³² The Buddha refers to these eleven as brahmins declaring, "Monks, these are brahmins coming, these are brahmins coming." When asked to define what he means by brahmin, he replies that they are awakened saints: "Barring out evil things, who are ever mindful fare, Awakened, bond-free — such in the world are surely brahmins."^d

Devadatta also appears with many of the characteristics of a saint even in passages that are openly hostile toward him. For example, he is depicted as one who meditates in solitude.^e Moreover, as we shall presently see, he espouses the *dhutaṅgas*, including living in the forest, dwelling under a tree, begging food, and wearing patched clothes. Devadatta is also a realized master and, through his awakening, is in possession of magical power. The laity are enamored of him and show their devotion through elaborate donations. He is a master who has disciples. He is an eloquent preacher, who "gladdened, rejoiced, roused, delighted the monks far into the night with talk on *dhamma*."^f Taken together, these features define not an evildoer, but a realized master who in many respects conforms to the paradigm of the Buddhist saint of the forest. This raises the question of why Devadatta is on the one hand vilified as the very embodiment of evil and on the other depicted as a realized saint. In order to address this question, let us consider the main themes of Devadatta's legend as found in the extant literature.

Legends

According to Mukherjee, who provides a detailed analysis of the texts surrounding Devadatta, the components of Devadatta's biography fall naturally into three parts: the main traditions, the secondary traditions, and the individual reports.⁹

Main Traditions. These include fifteen episodes found in the Pāli *vinaya*, in the *Vibhaṅga* (*Samghādisesa* 10) and the *Skandhaka* (*Cullavagga*) and, in more or less complete form, also in the *Vibhaṅga* and *Samghabhedavastu* of the *vinayas* of the Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, Sarvāstivāda, and Mūlasarvāstivāda. The content of these main traditions, shortly to be summarized, includes the

³² This list, containing the same saints given in the same order, appears in the *Majjhimanikāya* (3:78-79 [Horner 1954-59, 3:121]) — except for the fact that Devadatta is absent from his position as number ten. The two most reasonable explanations for this discrepancy are (1) that the *Mn* list represents the original list and that Devadatta was later added to the *Ud* list and (2) that the *Ud* list represents the earlier configuration, with Devadatta being removed in the *Mn* version. This latter option seems more likely for three reasons: (1) the antiquity of *Ud* in relation to the *Mn* (Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Louvain, 1958, p. 172); (2) given Devadatta's odious character in developed Buddhism, he is much more likely to be removed from a list like this than to be added to it; and (3) Devadatta does have a positive side, as we have seen, but as time goes on, it is increasingly hidden under a covering of vitriolic condemnation.

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Devadatta legend from the time of his admission to the order, through his efforts to split the community and his attempts on the Buddha's life, until his death.

Secondary Traditions. These include four episodes found primarily in the Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinaya* and the *Mahāvastu*, which include a résumé of Devadatta's family tree, his attempt to kill an elephant, his participation in an archery competition, and also his attempt to poison the Buddha and his fall into hell.

Individual Reports. These include an additional fifteen episodes each of which is found only in one text: nine are found in the Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinaya*, and the other six are scattered in the Aṅguttaranikāya, Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, Mahīśāsaka *vinaya*, Sarvāstivādan *vinaya*, and Ekottarāgama. These depict episodes from various periods of Devadatta's life from his childhood onward.

According to Mukherjee, the fifteen episodes of the main traditions, contained in the *vinayas* of the five schools, represent the oldest stratum and the essential foundation of the Devadatta biography. Both the secondary traditions and the individual reports clearly represent later additions to this material, a judgment in which Bareau,^h who has examined the Devadatta legends in detail, concurs.³³ The two contradictory facets of Devadatta's personality, saintly and diabolical, are unmistakably articulated already in the main traditions. Thus the question of the reasons for the contradictions in Devadatta's depiction may best be addressed in the early stratum of the legend, as found in the fifteen episodes of the main traditions. The following summarizes the Pāli account, with differences from the other *vinayas* noted where appropriate.

In the *Vibhaṅga, Saṃghādisesa* 10, we read that one day in the Bamboo Grove in Rājagṛha, Devadatta, who is himself a renunciant in the Buddha's order, approaches four other of the Buddha's renunciants (in the Pāli rendering), Kokālika, Kaṭamorakatissaka, the son of lady Khaṇḍā, and Samuddadatta. He proposes to them the splitting of the order. When Kokālika asks how they might carry out this intention, Devadatta suggests that he and his four compatriots approach the Buddha and ask him to institute five *dhuta*³⁴ practices that shall be mandatory on all his renunciants, saying

Lord, the lord in many ways speaks in praise of desiring little, of being contented, of expunging (evil), of being punctilious, of what is gracious, of decrease (of the obstructions), of putting forth energy. Lord, these five items are conducive in many ways to desiring little, to contentment. ...

³³ See especially André Bareau, "Étude du bouddhisme," *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1988-89, page 540.

³⁴ In the Pāli account, these five conventions are explicitly called *dhuta* (*vinaya* (Pāli) 3:171, Horner, trans., *The Book of Discipline*, vol. 1, *Suttavibhanga*, pp. 296-7). In other accounts, they are similarly identified as *dhuta* or *dhutanga* (Bareau, *op. cit.*, p. 541).

[1] It were good, lord, if the monks for as long as life lasted, should be forest dwellers; whoever should betake himself to the neighborhood of a village, sin [*vajjā*] would besmirch him.

[2] For as long as life lasts let them be beggars for alms; whoever should accept an invitation, sin would besmirch him.

[3] For as long as life lasts let them be wearers of robes taken from the dustheap; whoever should accept a robe given by a householder, sin would besmirch him.

[4] For as long as life lasts let them live at the foot of a tree; whoever should go undercover, sin would besmirch him.

[5] For as long as life lasts let them not eat fish and flesh; whoever should eat fish and flesh, sin would besmirch him.ⁱ

Devadatta then explains the rationale of his proposal: "The recluse Gotama will not allow these things. Then we will win over the people by means of these five items. It is possible, your reverence, with these five items, to make a schism in the Order of the recluse Gotama, a breaking of the concord. For, your reverence, people esteem austerity."^j

Following this, Devadatta with his four coconspirators approach the Buddha, and Devadatta puts forward his proposal. As anticipated, the Buddha is not receptive:

Enough Devadatta. ... Whoever wishes, let him be a forest-dweller; whoever wishes, let him dwell in the neighbourhood of a village; whoever wishes, let him be a beggar for alms; whoever wishes, let him wear rags taken from the dust-heap; whoever wishes, let him accept a householder's robes. For eight months, Devadatta, lodging at the foot of a tree is permitted by me [i.e., during the rains]. Fish and flesh are pure in respect of three points; if they are not seen, heard or suspected (to have been killed for him).^k

The Buddha, in effect, will allow Devadatta's austerities as optional practices for *bhikṣus*, but will not make them compulsory on all and certainly not "for as long as life lasts."

Receiving the Buddha's rejection, Devadatta is "joyful and exultant."^l Then, having paid reverence to the lord, he departs, journeying with his four friends to Rājagṛha. There, he proclaims to the laity that whereas he and his followers adhere to the rigorous practices, the Buddha and his followers do not. Some of the laity respond by praising Devadatta and his company. "These recluses, sons of the Sakyans, are punctilious [*dhuta*] and practice the expunging of evil; but the recluse Gotama is luxurious and strives after abundance."^m However there are other laity who, loyal to the Buddha, are distressed that a schism is in the making. When other renunciants of the Buddha hear of this incident, they make a report to the Blessed One, accusing Devadatta of fomenting a schism. The Buddha asks Devadatta if this report is true, and when Devadatta admits that it is, the Buddha castigates him and lays down the rule that if a *bhikṣu* should seek to foment a schism, he should be spoken to three times. If he does not pay heed, there is an offense entailing a formal meeting of the order, *saṃghāvśeṣa* (P., *saṃghādisesa*).ⁿ

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In the *Vibhaṅga, Saṃghādisesa* 11, we read of a further incident leading to a rule pertaining to those who support the fomenter of a schism. Kokālika, Kaṭamorakatissaka, the son of lady Khaṇḍā, and Samuddadatta overhear certain renunciants criticizing Devadatta for fomenting a schism: "Devadatta is not one who speaks *dhamma*, Devadatta is not one who speaks *vinaya*. How can this Devadatta proceed with a schism in the Order, with a breaking of the concord?" The four then respond, "Do not speak thus, venerable ones; Devadatta is one who speaks *dhamma*, Devadatta is one who speaks *vinaya*, and Devadatta having adopted our desire and objective, gives expression to them; he knows what he says for us seems also good to us." This is reported to the Buddha who institutes the rule that if certain *bhikṣus* support one who foments a schism, they should be admonished three times, after which, if they do not desist, there is an offense entailing a formal meeting of the order.^o

In *Cullavagga* 7, the story told in the *Vibhaṅga, Saṃghādisesa* 10, appears again but as part of a much fuller account of Devadatta's life and designs, summarized here according to Mukherjee's fifteen episodes of the main tradition. In chapter 7, we see Devadatta renouncing the world, along with six other Śākya youths,^p after a year following which Devadatta obtains supernatural power.^q Subsequently, Devadatta schemes to win lay converts and satisfy his desire for honor and material gain and decides to manifest his magical powers to the crown prince Ajātaśatru. Devadatta manifests himself to the prince as a young boy clad in a girdle of snakes, and Ajātaśatru, "greatly pleased with this wonder of psychic power on Devadatta's part, "becomes his loyal patron, lavishing offerings upon him morning and evening.^r Devadatta, inflated with his success, conceives a desire to become leader of the order in the Buddha's place, at which point his psychic powers diminish. This evil wish, known by a certain *deva*, is reported to the Buddha,^s as are Devadatta's successes with Prince Ajātaśatru.^t The Buddha is not troubled by these reports, for he remarks that Devadatta's mental states will decline and not grow.

Devadatta then approaches the Buddha and, pointing out that the master is now old, suggests that he, Devadatta, assume leadership of the order. The Buddha utterly rejects this request, remarking that "I, Devadatta, would not hand over the order of monks even to Sāriputta and Moggallāna. How then could I to you, a wretched one to be vomited like spittle?"³⁵ ^u After Devadatta has departed, angry and displeased, the Buddha tells the *bhikṣus* to carry out a formal act of information against Devadatta in Rājagṛha: "whereas Devadatta's nature was formerly of one kind, now it is of another kind; and that whatever Devadatta should do by gesture and by voice, in that neither the Awakened One nor *dhamma* nor the Order should be seen, but in that only Devadatta should be seen."^v The act being carried out, the Buddha asks Śāriputra to inform against Devadatta in Rājagṛha. When Śāriputra

³⁵ For a discussion of this insult, see Étienne Lamotte, "Le Buddha insulta-t-il Devadatta?" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33:107-15.

expresses hesitation because he had formerly spoken in praise of Devadatta, the Buddha allows that just as Śāriputra 's former praise had been true, now his condemnation will be equally true.^w When Śāriputra enters Rājagṛha and proclaims the act of information against Devadatta, Devadatta's lay devotees express the view that "these recluses, sons of the Sakyans are jealous, they are jealous of Devadatta's gains and honours," while others express willingness to trust the Buddha's judgment.^x

Following this, in the *Calvagga* account, Devadatta attempts to instigate Ajātaśatru to kill his father Bimbisāra in order to become king, while he, Devadatta, plans to kill the Buddha in order to usurp his position as leader of the *saṃgha*.^y Ajātaśatru is discovered, but instead of being punished, is given the kingship by his father. Devadatta then convinces Ajātaśatru to send assassins against the Buddha, but they are dissuaded from their intended act by the Lord's charisma, insight, and kindness.^z Devadatta next attempts to roll a boulder from a mountain height down on the Buddha. Although the boulder is miraculously destroyed, fragments draw blood from the Buddha's foot, which prompts the Buddha to remark, "You have produced great demerit, foolish man, in that you, with your mind, malignant, your mind on murder, drew the Truth-finder's blood."^{aa} ³⁶ Following this incident, the Buddha's *bhikṣus* are anxious lest Devadatta succeed in murdering their master. In order to prevent against this, they pace up and down on every side of the Buddha's dwelling, reciting their texts, "doing their studies together with a loud noise, with a great noise for the protection, defence, and warding of the Lord." The Buddha hears this cacophony and asks Ānanda what is going on. Upon being told, he replies that the *bhikṣus* are not to worry, as a Buddha cannot be killed before his time by such a one as Devadatta.^{bb} Next, Devadatta arranges to have a mad, man-killing elephant let loose against the Buddha, but this design also fails, as the Buddha tames the elephant with his loving-kindness and the elephant responds with acts of reverence.^{cc} The *Cullavagga* account next reports of Devadatta's "eating in groups." He wanders among the households, making requests, and is criticized by the people for eating with his friends and "having asked and asked among the households." The *bhikṣus* report this to the Buddha, who institutes a rule against the practice.^{dd}

Then follows the incident reported in the *Vibhaṅga*: Devadatta approaches his four companions and proposes the splitting of the order through advancing the five ascetic rules as obligatory.^{ee} The story is told in the same words except that it concludes not with the *saṃghāvaśeṣa* rule but rather with the Buddha simply enjoining Devadatta not to bring about a schism, warning, "whoever [does so] ... is boiled in hell for an aeon."^{ff} Devadatta, however, pays no heed and shortly thereafter announces to Ānanda in Rājagṛha that he plans to split the order by carrying out the *poṣadha* ceremony, "both in contradistinction to the Lord and in contradistinction to the Order of monks and will (so) carry out the (formal) acts of the Order."^{gg} Devadatta next gives out the *śalākā* (P., *salāka*), voting sticks or tickets, remarking in reference to the obligatory observance of the five rules, "The recluse Gotama does not

³⁶ One of the most heinous deeds in Buddhism.

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allow these, but we live undertaking these five items." He continues, "If these five items are pleasing to the venerable ones, let each one take a voting ticket. Five hundred *bhikṣus*, thinking, "this is the rule, this is the discipline, this is the Teacher's instruction," take the tickets. Thus is the order split.^{hh} These *bhikṣus* are not irreparably lost, however, for the Buddha, knowing what has transpired, sends Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana to Devadatta's camp. After arriving, these two seem to approve of Devadatta's dharma. However, when the usurper goes to sleep, they convince the five hundred *bhikṣus* to return to the Buddha.ⁱⁱ Kokālika then wakens Devadatta and tells him what has happened, whereupon hot blood issues from Devadatta's mouth and he dies.³⁷ ^{jj} The Buddha subsequently remarks that Devadatta "is doomed to the Downfall, to Niraya hell, staying there for an aeon, incurable."³⁸ ^{kk}

The four other *vinaya* accounts parallel the Pāli version quite closely. Apart from incidents that are idiosyncratic and can be left aside as likely later additions and not part of the early tradition, these accounts differ mainly in the details of the incidents and in their order. For example, whereas the four other accounts agree that Devadatta promoted five ascetic practices (with the exception of the Chinese version, which mentions four), there is disagreement on the precise members of the list. Thus the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* agrees with the Pāli in mentioning begging food, wearing robes made of rags, and eating no fish or flesh but does not mention living in the forest or under trees, including instead living in the open and taking neither butter nor salt. The other traditions similarly show some agreement and some disagreement with the Pāli and Dharmaguptaka lists.³⁹ Nevertheless, here, throughout the variations, the dramatic intent and meaning of the story are the same: Devadatta uses the proposal of the ascetic practices to bring about a split in the order.⁴⁰

³⁷ The Sarvāstivādin tradition has Devadatta not dying, the significance of which will become evident below. (See also André Bareau, "Étude de bouddhisme," in *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1988-89, p. 541.)

³⁸ See Buddhagosa's rendition of these events, *Dhammapada* commentary, E.W. Burlingame, trans., *Buddhist Legends*, London, 1921, 1979 reprint, 1:230-42. Hsüan-tsang visited a place to the east of Jetvana monastery where there was a deep pit through which Devadatta was said to have dropped into hell (Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, 629-645 A.D.*, ed. by T.W. Rhys Davids and S. W. Bushnell, London, reprint Delhi, 1973, vol 1, p. 390). See also, *Vinaya* (Tibetan), Derge edition of the Tibetan *Tripitaka*, 'dul.ba, nga, 292-a-93a.

³⁹ For discussion of the different lists, see Chapter 9, pp. 312-14.

⁴⁰ A version of Devadatta's proposed ascetic practices occurs in the Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinaya* preserved in Tibetan (Mukherjee's "Sanskrit tradition"):

- 1) The *śramaṇa* Gautama makes use of curds and milk; henceforth we will not make use of them, because by doing so one harms calves.
- 2) The *śramaṇa* Gautama makes use of meat; but we will not use it, because, if one does, living creatures are killed.
- 3) The *śramaṇa* Gautama makes use of salt; but we will

One also finds differences among the five *vinaya* traditions in the arrangements of the incidents. Mukherjee points to two subgroupings within the five traditions: on the one hand are the Theravāda, Dharmaguptaka and Mahīśāsaka; on the other, the Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda. It will be recalled that the Pāli account in the *Cullavagga* describes Devadatta's attempted murder of the Buddha and follows this with his efforts to cause a schism in the order by proposing compulsory adherence to the five ascetic rules. This same sequence is followed by the Dharmaguptaka and Mahīśāsaka. Mukherjee points out that this does not make sense, because after Devadatta had attempted to kill the Buddha, he certainly would have been expelled from the community, thus making it impossible for him to have approached the Buddha as a *bhikṣu* in good standing who could propose a matter of discipline. The Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda accounts, on the other hand, have these incidents reversed in the dramatically more logical order.

Interpretations

As mentioned, within the overall corpus of Devadatta legends, the fifteen episodes just summarized in their Pāli versions are, with some alterations, also found in the Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, Sarvāstivādin, and Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinayas*.⁴¹ This raises the question of what the earliest form of the Devadatta legend may have been. In addressing this question, Mukherjee examines the fifteen episodes as they appear in the five *vinayas*. He notes that whereas in the Pāli version, for example, all fifteen episodes appear in the *Cullavagga*, only episodes 13 (the attempt to have the ascetic practices made obligatory) and 14 (splitting of the order) appear in the *Vibhaṅga*. Moreover, the configuration of the legend in the *Cullavagga* suggests that episodes 13 and 14 were originally identified as *saṃghāvaśeṣa* offense. From this Mukherjee concludes that these two episodes represent the earliest core of the Devadatta legend.⁴² In addition, it may be observed that episodes 13 and 14 represent the necessary dramatic core — the basic theme of proposed and effected schism — around which the other episodes could crystalize as a further elaboration and explanation of the core.

not use it, because it is produced from a mass of sweat. 4) The *śramaṇa* Gautama wears gowns with cut fringes; but we will wear gowns with long fringes, because by his practice the skillful work of weavers is destroyed. 5) The *śramaṇa* Gautama lives in the wilds; but we will live in villages, because by his practice men cannot perform works of charity. (Vinaya (Tibetan), Derge edition of the Tibetan *Tripitaka*, 'dul.ba, nga, 289a-b.)

⁴¹ For a discussion of these *vinayas* and that of the Mahāsāṃghika, see Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Louvain, 1958, pp. 181-188.

⁴² To this he tentatively adds episode 6. Devadatta's practice of group begging and eating, which is present in most of the other *vinayas* and is briefly mentioned in the Mahāsāṃghika (Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, 146).

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The identification of episodes 13 and 14 as the earliest core of Devadatta's legend raises the further question of the time period in which these episodes may have originated. Mukherjee notes the important fact that the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* contains mention of Devadatta but does so in a form entirely different from the *vinayas* of the Theravāda, Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, Sarvāstivāda, and Mūlasarvāstivāda.^{ll} In fact there is no overlap between the Mahāsāṃghika treatment and that of the five schools. It will be recalled that the so-called first schism within Buddhism occurred between the Sthaviras — from which the Theravāda, Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, Sarvāstivāda, and Mūlasarvāstivāda all derive — and the Mahāsāṃghika. The fact that the Devadatta legend, including its core (episodes 13 and 14) and its elaboration (episodes 1 to 12 and 15), is common to the *vinayas* of the five schools deriving from the Sthavira but not found in the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* suggests that the legend arose among the Sthaviras, after they split from the Mahāsāṃghika in the fourth century B.C.E.⁴³ Thus, the Devadatta legend is, in Mukherjee's view, in its earliest form a production of the Sthaviras.

In what circumstances might this earliest core have arisen among the Sthaviras? In a recent article, Bareau^{mm} has examined the early part of the Devadatta legend as found in the *vinayas* of the Theravāda, Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, Sarvāstivāda, and Mahāsāṃghika (he has left aside that of the Mūlasarvāstivāda because it contains a considerable amount of later material). Bareau tells us that schism (*saṃghabheda*) is treated in the *vinayas* of the various schools in two sections, that of the *Skandhaka* (in which the *Culvagga* account is found) and the *Vibhaṅga*. Bareau begins with an examination of the *Skandhaka* treatment of Devadatta, noting that the core of the account is a very brief conversation held at Śrāvastī in which the Buddha, at the request of Upāli, defines *saṃghabheda*. In the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya*, this brief passage forms the totality of the chapter, whereas in the *vinayas* of the other schools it forms the conclusion of the extended legend of Devadatta. Bareau concludes that the tradition concerning the *saṃghabheda* in the Vinayapiṭaka may be reduced to the single, simple conversation between Buddha and Upāli. The complete silence of the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* concerning Devadatta in this discussion of *saṃghabheda* suggests that the linkage of Devadatta with this offense in the *vinayas* of the schools deriving from the Sthaviras is a later addition.ⁿⁿ Bareau's observation tends to confirm Mukherjee's conclusion that the core of the Devadatta legend arose among the Sthaviras after the first schism.

⁴³ Many features of the Devadatta legend are found in the *Edottarāgama*. Frauwallner believes that these features were originally contained in the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* and later separated from it. Mukherjee rejects this proposal, pointing out that the treatment of Devadatta in the *Edottarāgama* in fact differs markedly from that accorded him in the *vinayas* of the five schools, making Frauwallner's hypothesis unlikely (Mukherjee, *op.cit.*, 144).

Bareau identifies the same earliest core of the Devadatta legend as Mukherjee (episodes 13 and 14) but adds Mukherjee's episode 15, the conclusion of the story wherein the wayward *bhikṣus* return to the fold. He makes this addition because he does not assume — as does Mukherjee — that the *Vibhaṅga* version is the earlier. Unlike Mukherjee, Bareau begins his analysis with the legend of the schism as it appears in the *Skandhaka*, as the more authentic earlier version. Bareau's argument makes good sense, among other reasons because the *Vibhaṅga* version clearly leaves the story of the schism incomplete and dangling — in order to interject the rule that this story is supposed to have provoked — whereas the *Skandhaka* account gives the story in a dramatically complete form. Based on his analysis, Bareau tells us that three core elements of Devadatta's legend are present in all four *vinayas*. Found in a simpler form in the Mahīśāsaka and the Dharmaguptaka *vinayas*, they are: (1) Devadatta's proposal of the five rules as obligatory, which the Buddha rejects; (2) the departure of the five hundred *bhikṣus*, effecting the schism; and (3) the winning back of the five hundred by Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana.⁹⁰ These three elements are also found in Theravādin *vinaya*, with elaborations that tend mainly to further blacken Devadatta's reputation with additional crimes, and in the *vinayas* of the Sarvāstivāda, also in more elaborate form, in a slightly different order.

This analysis enables Bareau to identify three stages in the development of the Devadatta legend in the *Skandhaka* section of the *vinayas* of the schools:

1. In the earliest, preschism account of *saṃghabheda* in the *Skandhaka*, Devadatta does not appear at all (Mahāsāṃghika).

2. Devadatta enters the postschism *Skandhaka* of the schools deriving from the Sthaviras. Here he provokes the division of the community because he wishes to insist on a certain standard of rigor for all *bhikṣus*. Bareau comments, "the only fault of this person is having caused a temporary rupture in the *saṃgha* and revealing himself more strict than Buddha. Nothing leads to doubt about his sincerity or permits the attribution to him of bad motives."

3. Finally, in the latest stratum, Devadatta is accused of being filled with greed, pride, and ambition and of attempting various crimes, to set himself in the Buddha's stead, to induce Ajātaśatru to kill his father, to himself murder the Buddha, and so on — all in spite of his (in some accounts) previously saintly character. Bareau remarks, "the desire to condemn Devadatta and to make him completely odious is too clear for one to have confidence in this new portrait, which is nothing but pure calumny."⁹¹

Bareau next deals with the passage that discusses *saṃghāvaśeṣa* in the *Vibhaṅga*. All the versions accord major responsibility for the division in the community to Devadatta but differ in their explanations. In the Mahāsāṃghika version, Devadatta tries to break the community by any and all means, wanting to throw out all the rules of monastic discipline and the doctrinal teachings. Refusing to listen to advice and warnings of the virtuous *bhikṣus* and even of the Buddha, he recruits a body of

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unvirtuous disciples. Here is a portrait of Devadatta as the paradigmatic schismatic type, with no details given as to why he acted thus or what methods he used.⁴⁴ The Mahīśāsaka and Dharmaguptaka give much the same extended account as presented in the Theravādin *Skandhaka* version. The Theravādin version is much briefer, containing only Devadatta's proposal to the Buddha, the bulk of the other episodes being found in the Pāli *Skandhaka*. The Sarvāstivādin *Vibhāṅga* account is also short. In neither the Theravādin nor the Sarvāstivādin version do we find the least allusion to Devadatta's intrigues with Ajātaśatru or his attempts to kill the Buddha. Thus, the personality of Devadatta in the *Vibhāṅga* of these schools presents the same configuration as in the *Skandhaka* of the Mahīśāsaka and Dharmaguptaka: he is simply a saint who wishes that all *bhikṣus* follow a rigorous lifestyle. Bareau completes his discussion of the texts by observing that it is only upon this single depiction of Devadatta as a virtuous, "rigorist" *bhikṣus* that all the early *vinaya* texts agree.⁴⁴ The original Devadatta, Bareau concludes, was simply a saint whom Buddhist tradition, over the course of time, came more and more to hate.

This conclusion raises an important question: what is it about Devadatta that sets his Buddhist attackers on such a literary rampage? It is significant that Devadatta, in the earliest stage of this legend, is a forest saint⁴⁵ in the classical mold. He has renounced the world under the Buddha. He has practiced a forest style of Buddhism, including some form of the *dhutaḡaṇas*, retreat into solitude, and meditation, and he has reached some attainment. His attainment is given Buddhist legitimacy in being recognized by no less than Śāriputra (Pāli) or Ānanda (Sarvāstivāda),⁴⁶ and even by the Buddha himself. In his biographies, his realization is also indicated by his effortless and sometimes elaborate magical displays. In addition, a cult surrounds his person such that he may count among his devoted patrons even the crown prince and later king Ajātaśatru. Devadatta's cultic popularity is also clearly evidenced in the hostile witness of the Buddhist account, which acknowledges at several points the faith and enthusiasm of his lay supporters.

Devadatta is not only a forest saint but one who strongly advocates forest Buddhism as the only authentic type of Buddhist renunciation, seen in his proposing the *dhutaḡaṇa*-type practices as

⁴⁴ Bareau points out that neither the Mahāsāṃghikas nor the Sarvāstivāda in either their *Skandhaka* or *Vibhāṅga* versions, nor the Mahāsāṃghika nor Dharmaguptaka in their short versions (*Skandhaka*), link Devadatta with the Śākya family, and his family linkage with the Buddha is not mentioned in either *Skandhaka* or *Vibhāṅga* of any of the four schools. Bareau therefore finds it doubtful that this renunciant was a Śākya or a relation of the Buddha, as later held (Bareau, *op. cit.*, 544-45).

⁴⁵ The same identification is also suggested by the existence near old Rājagṛha of a sacred place, a cave known as the Devadatta *samādhī* cave mentioned by both Hsüan-tsang (Watters, *op. cit.*, 2:155) and Fa-hsien (Samuel Beal, trans., *The Travels of Fah-hian and Sung yun*, London, 1869, p.118).

⁴⁶ See note 31.

obligatory for all renunciants. His unwavering advocacy of forest Buddhism is also seen in the issue of leadership. Unlike his Buddhist critics, Devadatta — in his request to the Buddha to become leader after the Buddha is gone — assumes that the transmission of authority in Buddhism must pass from teacher to disciple; the more collective, textual, and institutional forms that came to characterize settled monasticism are not part of his thinking. Devadatta's identification with forest Buddhism is seen finally in the fact that — as explicitly seen in his rules — he is deeply distressed to see some *bhikṣus* taking up residence in villages, living in dwellings, receiving robes as gifts from the laity, accepting invitations from the laity to come to meals, and so on. As Bareau remarks, he is concerned that certain *bhikṣus* are enjoying the donations of rich laity too much and are becoming too attached to the things of this world, phenomena he "considers a form of laxity, a danger for the future of the community and of Buddhism altogether."^{ss} In this, his reaction is not dissimilar to the distress felt by Pārāpariya and Phussa in the *Theragāthā* over a similar movement to the village in their day. Like these two, Devadatta feels that the true dharma is to be found solely and strictly in the forest, and he appeals to the Buddha to back him up. Devadatta, then, is a classic forest saint who, like the other Buddhist renunciants we are examining in this book, identifies normative Buddhism with forest Buddhism. This strict identification of Devadatta with forest Buddhism undoubtedly provides one important reason for his vilification by later Buddhist authors. It is not just that he practices forest Buddhism, is a forest saint, and advocates forest renunciation. Even more, and worse from the viewpoint of his detractors, he completely repudiates the settled monastic form, saying in effect that he does not judge it to be authentic at all. Moreover, his loyalty to forest Buddhism cannot be shaken: even when he meets with intense resistance, he will not be moved.

This explanation is confirmed when we notice that his attackers are, among the Buddhists, precisely those most identified with settled monasticism. His most enthusiastic vilifiers are, first of all, those monastic schools deriving from the conservative, monastic Sthaviras. In addition, it is in precisely their *vinayas* — those texts in which the form of settled monasticism is consolidated and articulated — that this critique is carried out. In other words, Devadatta becomes significant as an enemy within the specifically monastic context and set of concerns. Further, it is clear that settled monastic values drive the Devadatta story even in its earliest form: the issue in question has to do with central authority and institutional unity, something that more or less presupposes just the kind of centripetal force provided by settled monasticism. Finally, the predominant values evinced by Devadatta's attackers are those of settled monasticism: although toleration of forest life is given lip service, the preferred — indeed, assumed — renunciant form is clearly the settled monastic one. It is no accident, then, that when the monks are worried about the Buddha's safety, they wander back and forth in front of his cave, reciting their *sūtras*, studying. The Buddha may be alone in his cave (may we guess that he is meditating?), but his disciples exist in a large group noisily going over their homework. It is also typical that the dramatis personae of the conflict square off as the solitary individual —

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Devadatta (his four friends and his gain and loss of the five hundred only highlight his aloneness) — versus the crowd of the Buddha's disciples. It seems clear that the core of the Devadatta legend, and particularly the vitriolic nature of the condemnation of this saint, is best understood as the expression of a controversy between a proponent (and his tradition) of forest Buddhism and proponents of settled monasticism, a controversy that in the sources is seen from the viewpoint of the monastic side.⁴⁷

There can be no doubt that Devadatta's schism is not an event imagined by Buddhist authors, but is a historic fact, as shown by the evidence provided by the two Chinese pilgrims, Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsen.⁴⁸ Fa-hsien, for example, reports that near Śrāvastī there was a community of disciples following Devadatta who rendered homage to the three previous buddhas, but not to Śākyamuni.^t As Bareau notes, this information gives indirect confirmation to the historicity of the ancient controversy that resulted in the disciples of Devadatta separating themselves from the mainstream, monastic Buddhist tradition. Hsüan-tsang, some two hundred years later, in the seventh century C.E., confirms the existence of disciples of Devadatta living in three monasteries in Bengal "in which, in accordance with the teaching of Devadatta, milk products were not taken as food."^{uu} This passage suggests adherence to a code more strict than those typical of Buddhist monks (though in Hsüan-tsang's time Devadatta's disciples live in monasteries!) and reveals a rule similar to one attributed to Devadatta in the

⁴⁷ There should be no surprise that the later monastic authors who set down Devadatta's legend in the form that we have it failed so thoroughly to understand this saint's person and motives. In this regard, Bareau observes,

The authors of the texts of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* lived a long time after the *parinivāṇa*, as proved by the numerous differences which separate their accounts, in an epoch in which the mode of monastic life had greatly changed. Like their confreres, or at least the majority of these, they lived in monasteries where they enjoyed a material comfort far superior to that which had been known by the first disciples of the Blessed One. They judged the conditions of their existence as completely normal and in conformity with the rules set forth by the Buddha, because the *saṃgha* had become little by little habituated to these over the course of time. [The monastic authors] could not therefore comprehend the meaning of the reform which Devadatta had wished to impose on all the monks one or two centuries earlier, and this return to primitive austerity seemed to them insupportable. For them, the intentions of this person could not therefore be anything but malevolent, dictated not by an excess of virtue, but by envy, pride, and hatred of the Buddha. Incapable of giving up their lifestyle, so much less demanding than that of the first disciples, they slanderously accused him who had wished to impose such a renunciation on their predecessors of having acted from pure malice. Later on, their own successors slanderously accused Devadatta of further crimes, the most grave they could imagine, in order to further justify their resentment in relation to him and their condemnation of his action. (*Op.cit.*, 546)

⁴⁸ See Bareau's discussion of this evidence in "Étude du bouddhisme," *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1988-89, p. 544.

Mahīśāsaka and Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinayas*.⁴⁹ It also suggests that the reason for Devadatta's schism was indeed his adherence to certain austerities of the *dhutaguṇa* type, which the mainstream community from which he and his group seceded were not willing to follow. These references also reveal the great success of Devadatta and his tradition: it was still in existence long (at least a millennium) after its separation from mainstream Buddhism.^{49ww}

The recognition of the historicity of Devadatta's schism leads naturally to the question of its rough date. The *Skandhaka*s of the various Sthavira-derived schools, of course, depict this schism as having occurred during the lifetime of the Buddha. They wish us to believe that the essential conflict occurred between Devadatta and the Buddha himself. However, as mentioned, in the earliest core of the *Skandhaka* discussion of saṃghabheda, as reflected in the Mahāsāṃghika version, Devadatta does not appear. This raises at least the possibility that Devadatta's schism arose not only after the death of the Buddha but also after the split between Mahāsāṃghikas and Sthaviras.⁵⁰ The fact that this story suggests the existence of a settled monasticism in a dominant form, which took some time to occur, also perhaps points to a similar conclusion.⁵¹

As far as the Nikāya *vinayas* are concerned, Devadatta is more or less totally condemned as "incurable" and relegated to outer darkness.⁵² It is interesting, then, that Devadatta is not always condemned in Indian Buddhism. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, for example, Devadatta is presented in a former life as a forest renunciant who assisted Buddha Śākyamuni to buddhahood.⁵³ In chapter 11 of the text the Buddha is preaching the Māhāyana to an assembled gathering, among whom is the *bhikṣu* Devadatta, whom the Buddha now praises.⁵⁴ In a former life, the Buddha says,

⁴⁹ Other scholars tend to agree with this interpretation (cf., e.g. Lamotte, *op.cit.*, 374 and 572; A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1970, p. 62; and A.M. Shastri, *An Outline of Early Buddhism*, Varanasi, India, 1965, pp. 44-45).

⁵⁰ The presence of Devadatta in the Mahāsāṃghika discussion of *saṃghāvaśeṣa*, then, would be the result of a later borrowing. This is suggested by the complete difference in the way in which the events surrounding this episode are portrayed in the Mahāsāṃghika version.

⁵¹ Consistent with his belief in the early and normative character of settled monasticism, Bareau puts the Devadatta schism during the lifetime of the Buddha (Bareau, *op. cit.*, 544).

⁵² One exception, however is provided by the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*, which says that one day Devadatta will be a pratyekabuddha.

⁵³ The importance of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* mention of Devadatta to a full discussion of Devadatta's identity has been noticed by Sugimoto (T. Sugimoto, "A Re-evaluation of Devadatta: the Salvation of Evil Men in Buddhism," in *Ronshu: Studies of Religion East and West*, 1982, 9:360-76).

⁵⁴ *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, 157.15-161.33 in H. Kern, trans. *The Saddharmapuṇḍarīka or The Lotus of the True Law*, Oxford, 1884; reprint, Delhi, 1965, pp. 243-48. In the Chinese version of Kumārajīva, this section takes the form of its own chapter (cf. Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (Lotus Sūtra)*, New York, 1976, pp. 195-201).

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there was a forest renunciant, a *ṛṣi*, whose spiritual life was oriented around the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* itself. At that time, this *ṛṣi* taught the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* to the bodhisattva in return for which the bodhisattva acted as his devoted servant for a thousand years. This seer was none other than Devadatta, whom the Buddha terms his *kalyāṇamitra*,^x or "spiritual friend" — in effect, his teacher. It was through training under Devadatta as his teacher, the Buddha tells us, that he was able to perfect the qualities⁵⁵ by which he eventually became a buddha.^y In future times, the Buddha continues, Devadatta will be greatly revered and honored and shall become no less than the greatly revered tathāgata Devarāja, who shall lead innumerable beings to enlightenment. After he has passed away, the dharma of this Buddha shall remain for twenty intermediate kalpas. Moreover, his relics will not be divided, but will be kept together in a single, gigantic stūpa, worshiped by gods and humans. So holy will be this stūpa that those who circumnambulate it may hope for realization as an arhant, a pratyekabuddha, or a buddha. Finally, in the future, a great blessing shall come to those who hear about Devadatta: for those hearing this chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, and gaining from it shall be liberated from rebirth in the three lower realms.⁵⁶ For at least one Buddhist tradition, then, Devadatta is clearly neither a *vinaya*-breaker nor the archenemy of the Buddha but is a simple *bhikṣus* in good standing, present in an assembly in which the Buddha is preaching the Māhāyana of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*. Moreover, he is identified as having been in a previous lifetime a forest saint devoted to the principal Māhāyana text of this tradition, one who made possible the present Buddha and his central Māhāyana teaching. Does this textual image of Devadatta, though written down much later, retain a tradition relating to this saint that antedates or is contemporaneous with his vilification in the various *vinayas*? This question, particularly in light of the Māhāyana associations of Devadatta in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* is intriguing.

^a William Woodville Rockhill, *The Life of the Buddha and the Early History of His Order*, London, 1884, p. 83.

^b Biswadeb Mukherjee, *Die Überlieferung von Devadatta, dem Widersacher des Buddha, in den kanonischen Schriften*, Munich, 1966, page 120; and André Bareau, "Étude du bouddhisme," *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1988-89, p. 541.

⁵⁵ The six *pāramitās*, great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), the thirty major and eighty minor marks, the ten powers, the four confidences, the eighteen special dharmas, and so on.

⁵⁶ A text preserved in Mongolian attempts to reconcile the good and evil personalities of Devadatta thus: "Stupid men believe wrongly and assert that Devadatta has been an opponent or enemy of the Buddha. That the sublime *bodhisattva* Devadatta during five hundred births, in which Buddha was going through the career of a *bodhisattva*, inflicted on him all possible evil and suffering was simply in order to establish the excellence and high qualities of the *bodhisattva*." (Edward J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History*, 3e, London, 1949, p. 135, citing I. J. Schmidt, *Geschichte der Ost-Mongolen*, Saint Petersburg, 1829, 311.)

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- ^c *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:189, in I.B. Horner, trans., *The Book of Discipline*, vol. 5, Cullavagga, London, 1938-66, p. 265.
- ^d F. L. Woodward, trans., *The Minor Anthologies of the Pāli Canon, 2: Udāna — Verses of Uplift and Itivuttaka — As It Was Said*, London, 1935, pp. 4-5.
- ^e *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:184, in I.B. Horner, trans., *The Book of Discipline*, vol. 5, Cullavagga, London, 1938-66, p. 259.
- ^f *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:200, *ibid.*, p. 280.
- ^g Biswadeb Mukherjee, *Die Überlieferung von Devadatta, dem Widersacher des Buddha, in den kanonischen Schriften*, Munich, 1966, pp. 6-7.
- ^h André Bareau, "Étude du bouddhisme," *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1988-89, pp. 533-47.
- ⁱ *Vinaya* (Pāli) 3:171 in I.B. Horner, trans., *The Book of Discipline*, vol. 1, *Suttavibhanga*, pp. 296-97.
- ^j *Vinaya* (Pāli) 3:171, *ibid.*, 297.
- ^k *Vinaya* (Pāli) *Vinaya* (Pāli) 3:171-72, in Horner, *op. cit.*, 298.
- ^l *Vinaya* (Pāli) 3:172, *ibid.*
- ^m *Vinaya* (Pāli) 3:172, *ibid.*, 299.
- ⁿ *Vinaya* (Pāli) 3:172-73, *ibid.*, 299-300.
- ^o *Vinaya* (Pāli) 3:174-75, *ibid.* 304-5.
- ^p *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:182-83 in Horner, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, Cullavagga, 257. Also Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, episode 1.
- ^q *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:183, *ibid.* Mukherjee, episode 2.
- ^r *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:184, *ibid.*, 259-60. Mukherjee, episode 3.
- ^s *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:185-87, *ibid.*, 260-62. Mukherjee, episode 4.
- ^t *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:187-88, *ibid.*, 262-63. Mukherjee, episode 5.
- ^u *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:188, *ibid.*, 264.
- ^v *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:189, *ibid.*, 264-65. Mukherjee, episode 7.
- ^w *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:189, *ibid.*, 265.
- ^x *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:190, *ibid.*, 266. Mukherjee, episode 8.
- ^y *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:190, *ibid.* Mukherjee, episode 9.
- ^z *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:191-93, *ibid.*, 268-71. Mukherjee, episode 10.
- ^{aa} *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:193, *ibid.*, 271. Mukherjee, episode 11.
- ^{bb} *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:193, *ibid.*, 271-272.
- ^{cc} *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:194-95, *ibid.*, 272-74. Mukherjee, episode 12.
- ^{dd} *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:196, *ibid.*, 274-75. Mukherjee, episode 6.
- ^{ee} Mukherjee, episode 13.
- ^{ff} *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:196-98, *ibid.*, 275-79.
- ^{gg} *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:198, *ibid.*, 278.
- ^{hh} *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:199, *ibid.*, 279. Mukherjee, episode 14.

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- ii *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:199-200, *ibid.*, 279-81. Mukherjee, episode 15.
- jj *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:200, *ibid.*, 281.
- kk *Vinaya* (Pāli) 2:202, *ibid.*, 283. Mukherjee, episode 15.
- ll Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
- mmm André Bareau, "Étude du bouddhisme," *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1988-89, pp. 533-47.
- nn *Ibid.*, pp. 539-40.
- oo *Ibid.*, 540ff.
- pp *Ibid.*, 542.
- qq *Ibid.*
- rr *Ibid.*, 544.
- ss *Ibid.*, 546.
- tt Samuel Beal, trans., *The Travels of Fah-hian and Sung yun*, London, 1869, p. 82.
- uu Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, 629-645 A.D., 2 vols. T.W. Rhys Davids and S.W. Bushnell, eds., London, 1904-1905; reprint, Delhi, 1973, p. 191.
- vv Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, 76-77.
- ww Bareau, *op. cit.*, 544.
- xx *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, 158.25-26 in H. Kern, trans. *The Saddharmapuṇḍarīka or The Lotus of the True Law*, Oxford, 1884; reprint, Delhi, 1965, p. 246.
- yy *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, 158.25ff in Kern, *op. cit.*