

Origin of the names Kinsman of the Sun - Sugarcane Lineage

Hopkins, Meditation on Emptiness - page 365

The current era is that of Shakyamuni Buddha, whose lineage is traced back to a child born from an egg. The egg formed from semen that dripped onto a sugar cane leaf from a man wrongly accused as a killer. He was strung up for punishment, and having proved his innocence through causing his teacher's very black face to turn golden, his semen dripped down onto a sugar cane leaf. It formed an egg which his teacher nurtured, and a child hatched. Thus, the child, the lineage, and eventually Shakyamuni himself came to be known as Sugar-Cane-One (*Ikshvaku, Bu ram shing pa*).

Sugarcane - Ikṣuh

Dan Martin, A History of Buddhism in Tibet Ikṣvāku Line

Now for our discussion on the early part of the Ikṣvāku line. Starting with the king we have already mentioned by the name of Cārumat, and continuing for 88,800 numbered kings, we come to one named King Karṇika. He had two sons, Gotama and Bharadvāja. Gotama had a penchant for renunciation, while Bharadvāja had an aptitude for governance.

Gotama, after witnessing the good and bad in the world, was thinking to himself, “When my father dies I will be made king, but if I do not practice Dharma I will fall into hell. Better if I were to become a renunciate.”

He went to his father and asked him, “Father, you must know. I have been inspired to faith and would like to renounce the world.”

His father responded, “What could bring you to say such words? After I die the royal rule will fall into the palm of your hand. Why would you renounce this?”

Gotama said, “One does not attain the wisdom of the Dharma through ruling. It is this that compels me to renounce the world.”

His father assented to his request, so he went to take up the life of renunciation at the side of the Ṛṣi Asita.

He addressed his master, “Wisdom is not attained in either the town or the hermitage, so I would like to stay on the outskirts of town.”

The Ṛṣi said to him, “It is alright to do this, my son. But whether you stay in a town or a hermitage, it all comes down to controlling the senses. Build yourself a leaf hut in the environs of the Potala country and stay there.”¹³¹¹ So he built a hut from leaves and was living in it.”

“Meanwhile his father died and the kingship was handed on to Bharadvāja.

In those days there lived in the city of Potala a prostitute by the name of Sumati and a crafty fellow named Mṛṇāla. In order to enjoy sexual pleasures with her he gave her gowns and ornaments. That evening she was on her way to the man's house when on the path she spied a man holding five hundred kārṣāpaṇas. He said, “Sumati, come with me. Let us enjoy pleasures together.”

When he gave her the kārṣāpaṇas she decided to stay with him, and so she sent off her maidservant to Mṛṇāla with a message, “Tell him to wait. I don't have time right now. I have something I need to do first.”

The maidservant went to Mṛṇāla's house and delivered her message. But this made him very angry, so later he said to Sumati, "What goes here? How could you have sex with another man while wearing the gowns and ornaments I gave you?"

"I was thinking the night was very long, and I could please both of you, so I stayed." Her words enraged him, and he chopped right through the woman's waist with his sword.

The maidservant was weeping deliriously, "My lady has been slain!" Everyone rushed to her aid, and with his pursuers closing in on him, he dropped his bloody sword next to the hut of Gotama. They all saw the sword lying there and exclaimed, "How could you have done a thing like this? You who wear the banner of sages with the wisdom of the scriptures?"

Gotama responded, "I have given up sinful deeds, so how could I do a thing like this?"

Although he spoke finely, they would not listen to him, but tied his hands behind his back and handed him over to the king. The king passed judgment and had him impaled."

"Then the sage Asita, beholding his duḥkha, his suffering, spoke to him, "Gracious mercy! What wicked thing have you done, my son?"

Gotama was unable to speak clearly, and answered in muffled tones, "Master, do not ask me. Whatever bad thing happened was through no fault of mine."

The master asked, "How did you get your wounds if you haven't committed any crime with your body?"

Gotama replied, "My body was wounded, yet with my mind no wrong was done. I announce one truth. If I have done no wrong may the black color of the master turn into a gold color." The master turned into the color of gold, and was known from then on as the sage Kanakavarṇa.

Then Gotama asked the master, "When I die, where will I be reborn?"

The master said, "If we go by the secret words of the brahmins, they say that those "with no descendants do not go anywhere after death. Perhaps you could propagate your family line?"

"I took renunciate vows when I was young, so I have less familiarity with women than other men do. At the moment I am under dreadful pain, so I am afraid engendering a child is entirely out of the question."

"True, but I know of a method we ought to attempt. You simply must try to remember lust." The master brought down a windy drizzle, and when the cold wind touched Gotama's body it masked his pain and brought relief. Then he managed to remember lust, and in doing so, three drops of semen mixed with his blood dripped down. These ripened under the light of the sun and became three eggs. The eggs hatched and out came three children.

Then Gotama died and the sage Kanakavarṇa was going back to his forest" "when he saw the eggshells. He thought, 'What is going on here?' and had a closer look. Then he found the three children. Knowing them to be Gotama's sons, he took them to a suitable place and fed them. At their naming rite, he gave them the name Sūryavaṃśa, since they were incubated and hatched by the sun. On account of the absence of any mother and because they grew on their own limbs, he called them "Aṅgaja." Since he had found them in a sugarcane grove, he called them "Ikṣvāku."

When the first egg was incubated and hatched, out came the one called "Mahāśākya." This being the lineage of the senior brother, it lasted from Mahāsammata over 700,000 generations until it finally came to an end with Rāhula.

The middle one to incubate, hatch, and produce a child was that of Śākya Licchavi. This evolved into four lineages, the descendent of the first being the Kosala King" "Prasenajit, then the Magadha King Bimbisāra, the Vatsala King Udayana, and the Ikṣvāku King Virūdhaka.

When the final egg incubated and hatched it produced a small child who was called “Śākya Karvaṭa.” His lineage came to include both Śātānīka and Pāṇḍu.

Then the royal line of King Bharadvāja came to an end. The ministers called a meeting. “Who shall be empowered as king?” was the question, and at last they agreed that it was his own elder brother Gotama who ought to be coronated. They went to the place where Kanakavarṇa stayed and asked him, “Where can we find Gotama?”

“It is you and you alone who killed Gotama,” replied the sage.

“How can you tell a story like this? We did not kill Gotama.”

“Well, you may not be the ones who did the slaying, but this is how he was killed . . . ,” and he retold the entire story in all its details.

“They saw there were three children standing by the sage’s side. “Whose children are these three?”

“They are Gotama’s children.”

“How were the three of them born, and what are their names?”

When the sage went on to finish their stories in detail, the ministers were amazed at what they heard and took the three children with them, giving them the names Mahāśākya, Śākya Licchavi, and Śākya Karvaṭa.¹³²⁸ Their lineages were as stated above. This brings our account of the early Ikṣvāku to a close.

Footnotes

1308. The name of the lineage means “sugarcane,” and of course a grove of sugarcane figures in the story of its origins.

1309. The story that follows largely corresponds to one told in Blue Annals (Roerich tr.), 5–8, which ought to be compared. A footnote here gives various other “sources for the story. One may also wish to compare Nyang ral’s history, 133–35, although it has less detail.

1310. The preceding part is very likely derived from this Vinaya Sections passage, at fol. 266a, with which it ought to be compared.

1311. I wonder if we might need to Sanskritize Gru ’dzin as Potana rather than Potala. Potana was a major city within the area of the nation of the Aśmakas in early times. This needs more thought.

Potala, evidently intending the same city, is mentioned several more times in our text below. So we may need to resist our natural tendency to connect it with the more famous Potalas that were abodes of Avalokiteśvara.

1312. The preceding part ought to be compared with a Vinaya Sections passage, fol. 266b.

1313. The name has an etymological meaning of “to be crushed,” but in ordinary usage it just means “lotus rhizome,” as does the Tibetan version we have.

1314. There has been a lot of discussion about the meaning of this word. Although it may have once meant “cowrie shell,” it came to be used for coins of gold and silver. In any case, five hundred coins would have been a considerable amount of cash in those days.

1315. The preceding part ought to be compared with this section from the Vinaya Sections, fol. 267a, on which it evidently is based.

1316. Banner of sages is an epithet for the renunciate’s robe.

1317. The preceding section ought to be compared with this Vinaya Sections passage on which it is evidently based, fol. 267b.

1318. His old name meant “Black Color,” and his new name, “Gold Color.” There is a corresponding Vinaya Sections passage for the preceding part, fols. 267b–268a.

1319. I read sba la zhi, meaning “hiding” (hence the translation “masked”) and “soothing,” in place of our text’s sbal zhi. The Section on Divisions in the Monastic Community version has the verb rnam par mnan pa here, with its present form rnam par gnong pa, which might have the sense of braving one’s way through something, or of obstructing or impeding something.

1320. The Section on Divisions in the Monastic Community account for the preceding part is found at fol. 268a.

1321. The Vinaya Sections account differs here in saying there were two, not three eggs: khu ba’i thigs pa de gnyis sgong gnyis su gyur nas nyi ma shar ba’i dus kyi tshe nyi ma’i ’od zer gyis smin nas rdol ba dang khye’u gnyis shig byung nas | de dang ha cang yang mi ring ba’i “bu ram shing gi tshal gseb der de gnyis zhugs so. Nyang ral’s history, 134, agrees in telling about two eggs, and later on it is quite consistent about there being two rather than three children.

1322. Here the khog of our text needs to be emended to kog.

1323. The word vaṃśa generally means the bamboo cane, or some other type of cane, the roofing beams of a house, a lineage, and still other meanings. I think it can best be understood here as a family lineage chart in the form of a straight line of descent devoid of branches, much like the bamboo tree. The Tibetan gnyen means a connection, assistant, or relative. Therefore it is a little difficult to understand this passage.

1324. For this and earlier paragraphs, compare Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha*, 10–11; Strong, *Buddha*, 36–37; as well as Sørensen, *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography*, 51 (here there are two eggs, not three). To judge from the entry “Okkāka” in *Malalasekera dictionary*, 1: 461–62 (and the entry for “Sakyā” in 2: 969–72), the Pāli tradition tells quite a different story about the origins of the Śākya clan.

1325. In Pāli this king “is known as Viḍūḍabha. See *Malalasekera dictionary*, 2: 876–77.

1326. I believe Ri brag or Ri brag pa is Sanskrit Karvaṭa, which can be the name of a people in *Mahābhārata*. The name occurs again below. The name suggests they lived in mountain hamlets.

1327. The incorrect spelling Skyabs seng ge that we find in our text is perhaps more commonly used than the correct one, Skya seng ge. The Dmag rgyal of our text is also an incorrect form for Dmag brgya. It is generally understood that the Pāṇḍava brothers descended from the Pauravas (the house of Puru).

1328. Our text spells Licchavi as Li rtsa byi.”