



Mahavastu (great story)

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This page describes story of trapusha (trapusa) and bhallika which is Chapter XXVIII of the English translation of the Mahavastu ("great story"), dating to the 2nd-century BC. This work belongs to the Mahasanghika school of early Buddhism and contains narrative stories of the Buddha's former lives, such as Apadanas, Jatakas and more..

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Chapter XXVIII - The story of Trapuṣa (Trapusa) and Bhallika

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After he had left the abode of Mucilinda the **Nāga** king, the Exalted One spent the sixth week fasting in joy and ease at the foot of the Goatherd's Banyan-tree. When this sixth week at the foot of the Goatherd's Banyan-tree was over, (303) he spent the seventh week fasting in joy and ease at a shrine of many **devas** in a thicket of *ksīrikā*^[1] trees. Thus the Exalted One fasted for seven weeks or forty-nine days.

In the north country is a town^[2] called **Ukkala**.^[3] Now it happened that two merchants of this town of Ukkala, by name Trapusa^[4] and **Bhallika**,^[5] who were rich, wealthy, opulent, virtuous, and possessing many attendants, were coming with five hundred loads along that way from the south. Of their luck-bringing oxen one bull was born under the constellation **Sujāta**,^[6] and another under the constellation Kīrtika.^[7] And they were hence called **Sujāta** and Kīrtika after the constellations. They went in front of the whole caravan drawing the leader's waggon. Wherever on the journey there was any danger, whether from a lion, tiger, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant, demon of the forest, flood or brigand, the bulls would refuse to go that way. The merchants thus knew there was danger there, and they would come together and go scouting in all directions.

Now the bulls Sujāta and Kīrtika came to the thicket of *ksīrikā* trees. There in the thicket of *ksīrikā* trees they were stopped by the magic power of the dead relatives of the traders Trapusa and Bhallika who had become devas, and they could not go on. When they stopped all the men of the caravan became frightened and got ready to fight. But the relations who had become devas, standing in the air, raised a shout and made their noise heard. "Traders," cried they, "be not afraid. No danger threatens you. But the Exalted One, the **Buddha**, abides in the wood here, having appeared after a period of seven incalculable *kalpas* for the sake of the welfare and happiness of mankind, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and welfare of the great multitude of devas and men. (304) And he has been fasting these seven weeks or forty-nine days. Serve him with food. Thus will your root of merit be infinite."

On hearing the words of the devas the traders Trapusa and Bhallika brought refreshment of honey mixed with ghee. And the devas went in front of the traders, saying, "Come, this way." Thus the traders were led by the devas into the presence of the Exalted One.

The traders, taking with them the refreshment of honey, approached the Exalted One and said to him, "We pray thee, Lord, eat of this refreshment of honey as a favour to us."

But then this thought occurred to the Exalted One: "Now did the perfect **Buddhas** of yore receive food in their bowls or in their hands^[8]? They took it in bowls." As soon as this thought occurred to the Exalted One, the Four Guardians of the world^[9] came bearing four golden bowls and went up to him. But the Exalted One, on the score that bowls of precious metal were not suitable for a recluse, would not accept them. So they brought silver bowls and went up to the Exalted One. But these again the Exalted One would not accept, because they were of precious metal. In the same way they brought bowls of pearl, of beryl, crystal, white coral and ruby, but on the score that bowls of precious stones were not suitable for a recluse, the Exalted One would not accept them.

Finally they came to the Exalted One bringing bowls of stone.^[10] Then the thought occurred to the Exalted One: "If I accept a bowl of one Guardian of the world, misgiving will arise in the hearts of the other three." So the Exalted One accepted all the four bowls of the Four Guardians. He touched them with his thumb and they became one bowl. But though the four bowls were thus become one bowl, four *koṭis* of replicas of all the four bowls were to be seen.^[11]

Then the Exalted One partook of the refreshment of honey given him by the traders Trapusa and Bhallika.

(305) When the Exalted One had drunk the refreshment of honey which had been given him by the traders Trapusa and Bhallika and which was choice and exquisite, having good colour, smell, and taste, he pronounced a blessing^[12] on them:

Many a goodly quality the refreshing food was said to have. It was good of colour, smell and taste.

The first refreshment that Trapusa and Bhalliya gave the Master was choice, exquisite, desirable and fitting.

The Supreme of men drank this drink of honey and ghee. By them was the Hero regaled as he came out of his seclusion, as he himself regaled devas, **Gandharvas** and men with the rain of **dharma**.

He bestowed^[13] a blessing on them,^[14] a blessing divine, bringing good luck and success. When they heard it they were glad, for it would prosper all their affairs.

Blessing be on your men and on your beasts; blessing be on you when you go your ways and when you return.

Blessing be on you by night and by day; blessing be on you at noon-tide. Blessing be on you always; may no evil befall you.

May good luck stand on your right shoulder and on your left; may good luck cling to your every limb like a garland.

Good fortune and good luck be yours, traders; may it be well with you on whatever business you go to the regions of the east.

May the stars that stand over that region protect you, **Kṛttikā**,^[15] **Rohiṇī**, **Mrga**, **Ārdra**, **Punarvasu**, the fair constellation **Puṣya**, and **Aśleṣā**, the seventh.

(306) These are seven glorious constellations which keep ward in the world; to them is assigned the eastern quarter in the region of the east.

May these watch over you abroad and at home.^[16] May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by these constellations.

In the region of the eastern quarter are eight young **deva** maidens, Nandottarā, Nandisenā, Nandinī, Nandirakṣitā, Jayantī, Vijayantī, **Siddhārthā** and **Aparājitā**, whose sovereign lord is named **Dhṛtarāṣṭra**.^[17]

He is king and lord of the Gandharvas, and is protected by the devas.^[18] May he, too, watch over you abroad and at home.

May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by all the devas.

In the region of the eastern quarter is a shrine named **Cāpala**,^[19] which is always ablaze with splendour and where prayers are always answered.^[20] May it watch over you abroad and at home.

May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by all the shrines.

On whatever business you go to the south, may the constellations that stand in that quarter guard you—**Maghā**, the twin **Pāḷgunī**, **Hastā**, **Citrā**, the fifth, (307) **Svātī** and **Viśākhā**—the southern quarter is theirs.

These are seven glorious constellations which keep ward in the world; to them is assigned the southern quarter in the regions of the south.

May these watch over you abroad and at home. May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by these constellations.

In the region of the southern quarter there are eight young deva maidens, Lakṣmīmatī, Śīrīmātī, Yaśomatī, **Yaśodharā**, Śubheṣṭhitā, Suprabhātā, Suvisuddhā and Suvyākṛtā. May these, too, watch over you abroad and at home.

May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by these deva maidens.

Their lord and king is named **Virūḍhaka**. May this king and lord of the **Kumbhāṇḍas**, together with **Yama**, protect you.

May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by the Kumbhāṇḍas.

In the region of the southern quarter is a shrine named Abhiṣāya,^[21] which is always ablaze with splendour and where prayers are always answered.

May this, too, watch over you abroad and at home. May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, safeguarded by the shrine.

On whatever business you go to the western quarter (308) may the constellations that stand in that quarter guard you: **Anurādhā**, **Jyeṣṭhā**, **Mūla**, steady and strong, the twin **Āśādhās**, **Bhijī**, and the seventh, **Śravaṇā**.

May these, too, watch over you abroad and at home. May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by these constellations.

In the region of the western quarter are eight young deva maidens, **Alambuṣā**, Mīsrakeśī, Ariṣṭā, Suprabhāyākā, . . .^[22] **Kṛṣṇā**, **Śukrā** and **Draupadī**. May these, too, watch over you and give you health and prosperity.

May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by these deva maidens.

Their lord and king is named **Virūpākṣa**. May he, the lord and king of **Nāgas**, together with **Varuṇa**, protect you. May he watch over you abroad and at home. May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, protected by all the Nāgas.

In the region of the western quarter is a mountain called Asta, where the moon and sun turn round.^[23] May Asta give you wealth. May it, too, watch over you abroad and at home.

May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, all guarded by Asta.

On whatever business you go to the northern quarter, (309) may the constellations that stand in that quarter guard you,

Dhaniṣṭhā, **Śatabhiṣā**, the twin **Proṣṭhapadā**, **Revatī**, **Aśvinī**, and the seventh, **Bharāṇī**.

May these, too, watch over you abroad and at home. May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by these constellations.

In the region of the northern quarter eight young deva maidens are gathered, Ilādevī, Surādevī, Pṛthivī, **Padumāvātī**,

Āśā, **Śraddhā**, **Hirī** and **Śirī**.^[24] May these watch over you abroad and at home.

May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by these deva maidens.

Their lord and king is named **Kuvera**. He is lord and king of all the **Yakṣas**. May he, together with the **Rākṣasīs** protect you.

May he, too, watch over you abroad and at home. May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by the Yakṣas and Rākṣasas.

In the region of the northern quarter is a mountain called **Kailāsa**,^[25] the abode of the **Yakṣa** hosts and the home of the Rākṣasas.

May it, too, watch over you abroad and at home. May the quarters be propitious to you. May no evil befall you. Return successful, guarded by the Yakṣas and Rākṣasas.

Eight and twenty constellations, seven for each of the four quarters, (310) with the moon and sun making a full thirty.

Two and thirty deva maidens, eight for each of the four quarters. Four Great Kings, glorious guardians of the world, with blazing radiance guard the four quarters.

Eight recluses,^[26] eight **brahmans**, eight nobles in the provinces, eight devas with **Indra**,^[26] may these always watch over you.

Then the Exalted One gave them the three resorts^[27] of refuge. "Come," said he, "to the refuge of the Buddha, to the refuge of the dharma, to the future refuge of the Exalted One's community of disciples." And so they came to the refuge of the Buddha, of the dharma and of the **Saṅgha**.

Then they said, "We, Lord, are traders who range over many a country and kingdom. Well would it be if the Exalted One were to give us^[28] a relic which we could worship." With his own hand the Exalted One cut off some of the hair on his head and gave it them, saying, "Have a tope made for this hair." He then cut his nails and gave them the parings, saying, "Have a tope made for my nails. Stones will be provided^[29] you and do you set them up." So they erected a tope for the hair where the place named Keśasthālin now is. They erected a tope for his nails where the city named Vāluḥsa now is. At the place named Śilukṣā^[30] they set up the stones which the Exalted One by his magic power had thrown there with his own hands.^[31]

Then the Exalted One, after his fast of seven weeks or forty-nine days, drank (311) the refreshing drink of honey given by Trapusa and Bhallika. But then the bilious humour of the Exalted One overflowed.^[32]

Then **Śakra**, lord of the devas, offered the Exalted One the fruit of the myrobalan tree,^[33] saying that it would ease^[34] the humours. The Exalted One partook of the myrobalan and he planted the stalk in that spot. And on that very same day it grew into a big myrobalan tree with wide-spreading branches and laden with flowers and fruit. This was the first of the trees that grew by the magic power of the Exalted One. The myrobalans which grew from this tree are to-day known as the Consecrated Myrobalan Wood.^[35]

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES:

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[1]: *Kṣīrikā*, an unidentified tree. Cf. vol. 2, pp. 248, 475 (text). *Ī*. 1.3, says he sat at the foot of the *Rājāyatana* tree, while *Lal.Vist.* 381 calls the tree *Tārāyaṇa*. *Dpvs.* 2.50 seems to approximate the *Mhvu.* tradition when it calls the tree *khirapāla*. According to *Ī* 1.1, he fasted only four weeks. *Ī*. 1.77 and *Lal.Vist.* 377ff, like the *Mhvu.*, make the period seven weeks.

[2]: The simply says "place" and *adhiṣṭhāna*. *D.P.N.* is not correct in taking this as the proper name of the place from which Trapusa and Bhallika hailed. The text simply says *Uttarāpathe Ukkalāṃ nāmādhiṣṭhānam*, which must be interpreted as *Ukkalanāma adhiṣṭhānam*.

[3]: Ukkalā in Pali. The region is generally identified with the modern Orissa. See *Vin. Texts* 1 p. 81, Thomas: *Life of Buddha* p. 85, and *D.P.N.* But the *Mhvu.* definitely places it in the north country and implies that they were passing that way on their journey home from the south, *dakṣiṇāpathāto*.

[4]: Also spelt Trapuṣa in this story. The Pali forms vary between Tapassu and Tapussa.

[5]: In Pali also Bhalliya and Bhalluka. The story of Trapusa and Bhallika is also found at *Ī* 1.4, *Ī*. 1.80, and *Lal.Vist.* 381ff., and *BudvA.* 290f. It is an unknown constellation.

[6]: *Kīrtikā*. According to Senart this is a wrong Sanskritisation of *kittikā*, instead of *kirttikā*, "the Pleiades." Cf. *Kārttika*, the month December. Below, p. 305 (text) it is correctly spelt *kṛttikā*. But Senart's reading *kirttikā* may be queried. Edgerton, however, accepts it as "hyper-Skt. for Δ Mg. *kittīā* = Skt. *kṛttikā*." (*B.H.S.D.*). This seems to be the only known instance of the form.

[7]: Edgerton, *Gram.* § 22. 4, interprets this passage differently. He takes *pāni* in *pāṇigrāhaka* as an Δ Mg. word for "water" (see *B.H.S.D.*), whence his translation "did they take a bowl (of food) or water?" But *pāṇi* in its Skt. sense of "hand" would seem to give a better meaning here, that is, "taking (food) in a bowl," *bhājanapratigrāhaka*, is contrasted with "taking (food) in the hand." Besides, the context deals with the matter of providing the Exalted One with bowls, and not with that of providing him with food as contrasted with water.

[8]: *I.e.*, the "Four Great Kings." See vol. 1, p. 25, *n.* 3.

[9]: At *Ī* 3. 243 (= 4. 243) the orthodox bowls must be of iron or clay (*matṭikā*). *Ī* 2.112 adds that they must not be of gold, silver, jewels, beryl, crystal, bronze, tin, lead or copper.

[10]: Literally "four *koṭis* of all the four bowls were seen," *sarveṣāṃ catuṛṇāṃ pātrāṇāṃ catvārī pātrakofīni dṛśyanti*.

[11]: *Dakṣiṇām ādisāti*. Cf. Pali *dakṣiṇam ādisati*, "to assign a gift." Although the following verses are practically identical with those found at *Lal.Vist.*, 387ff, in the same context, there is yet too much difference in detail for the text of the latter to be taken as a sure guide in correcting the occasional faultiness of the *Mhvu.* text. It is to be noted also that the *Mhvu.* differs from *Lal.Vist.* in having a few verses at the beginning which contain a brief allusion to the occasion on which they were spoken.

[12]: *Disē*, aor. of *disāti*. Senart prefers this reading to *disā* in spite of the frequent allusions to the "quarters" of the world in the sequel and in spite of the reading in *Lal.Vist.* Besides, a finite verb is needed in our text.

[13]: *Sovatthika*. Pali and BSk., Sk. *svastika*.

[14]: The constellations and mythological persons mentioned in these verses are left unannotated: they will be found listed in the dictionaries. Although the verses are put in the mouth of the Buddha, they contain nothing specifically Buddhist. They evidently were a traditional song of prayer or magic recited to safeguard travellers on distant journeys. It is interesting to note that both the *Mhvu.* and *Lal.Vist.* introduce the song at the same point in the story. The lists of names are practically identical in the two texts. It should be noted, however, that *Lal.Vist.* adds some verses at the end, which imply that the whole poem was composed and recited by the Buddha on this particular occasion.

[15]: ? *bhūmiye bhavanaena* (instr. for loc.) *ca*, literally, "in the district (and) at home."

[16]: One of the "Four Great Kings." See vol. 1, p. 25, *n.* 3. The others are mentioned below, viz. Virūḍhaka, Virūpākṣa and Kuvera. As a "Great King" the last is generally known by his patronymic Vaiśravaṇa (See, e.g., vol. 2, p. 153, *n.* 15).

[17]: See p. 297, *n.* 1.

[18]: This is probably mythical. At any rate it cannot be identical with the well-known Cāpāla-cetiya near Vesālī, the capital of the Vajjis to the north of the Ganges. *Lal.Vist.* names it *Acāpala*.

[19]: *nityaṃ satiyoṇyācanam*, literally "which always has true prayer."

[20]: Otherwise unknown. The corresponding name in *Lal.Vist.* is Padma.

[21]: Lacuna, which Senart prefers to leave in his text rather than restore it after *Lal.Vist.*

[22]: Literally "(which is) the turning round of moon and sun," *āvarto gandharvāyāṇām*. *Asta*, "the western mountain," is the same word as is used in the expression *astam i (yā)* meaning, "to go down," "set."

[23]: Senart reads *Śīrī* and leaves a lacuna after it. But perhaps, the line should be made up by reading the BSk. form of this name, *Śīrī*, as in *Lal.Vist.*, and adding a conjunction like *atha* or *api ca*. One MS. actually has *api*.

[24]: A mountain range located in the Himalayas and famous in epic and Buddhist mythology. In the *Mhvu.* it is the home of Kinnaras. See vol. 2, PP. 34, 97, 109 (text).

[25]: The allusion to the eight recluses, brahmans and nobles, which is found in *Lal Vist.* also, is obscure. As for the eight devas, Senart suggests that they consist of the "Four Great Kings" each attended by another deva. Thus Yama is invoked by Virūḍhaka and Varuṇa with Virūpākṣa. To get Dhṛtarāṣṭra's auxiliary deva Senart suggests that, at verse 10, p. 306, for *devehi sa ca rakṣitah* we should read *devendreṇa sa rakṣatu*. The latter reading is more reasonable on other grounds also, for the text makes a "Great King to be protected by devas at the same time as he is invoked himself to protect human beings. In *Lal.Vist.* Mañibhadra is invoked with Kuvera, and Senart suggests that for *rākṣasthī* at verse 14, p. 309 should be substituted either this name or the name of a companion deva.

[26]: *I.e.*, Buddha, dharma and the Saṅgha. At *Ī* 1, 4 they are said to come to only two refuges, that of the Buddha and that of dharma, the Saṅgha not being yet established. They are there thus said to be "the first lay-disciples in the world using the two-word formula (*dvevācīkā*). See I. B. Horner: *Bk.of Disc.*, Vol. 4, p. 6.

[27]: *Mam.*, gen. pl. See p. 61, *n.* 1.

[28]: "Will come," *āgamisyanti*.

[29]: These three places do not seem to be otherwise known. Rhys Davids, in *Buddhist Birth Stories*, p. 206, *n.* 2, has an interesting note on these hair-relics, in the course of which he alludes to the legend of both the Burmese and the Singhalese to be the random possessors of them. He alludes also to the fact that the legend as given in *Ī* is found in an ancient inscription on the great bell at Rangon.

[30]: See below, p. 313 (text).

[31]: Senart's text here is *pītena Bhagavato te ca abhiṣyanditā*. He takes the latter word as meaning "overflowed (with satisfaction)," *i.e.*, "they (Trapusa and Bhallika) were overjoyed that the Buddha had drunk." But the verb *abhiṣyandati* is also used of the "over-flow" of the humours of the body. See, e.g., 3. 143, 144, 153, 154 and cf. Pali. Edgerton (*B.H.S.D.*) in calling attention to this wrong interpretation by Senart adds that the exact reading of the whole sentence is uncertain; possibly, he says, it should be *tathā* (so MSS.) *abhiṣyanditam* (impersonal), "over-uberance of humours was caused." But it may be suggested that for *pītena*, which is not readily constinable, we should read *pittāni* or *pittā* and retain *abhiṣyanditā*, or else *pittaṃ abhiṣyanditam*, "the bilious humour overflowed." Hence the purgative *haritakī* given the Buddha by Śakra, so that there should be the humours, *dhātūnām sukhaṃ bhavisyanti* (Senart, however, emends *sukhaṃ* (so MSS.) into *mukham* giving the sense, "so that the myrobalan tree should be the chief of relics" (*dhātūnām*).

[32]: *Haritakī*. Pali (also Sk.) *harītaka*, yellow myrobalan, *Terminalia citrina* or *chebulu*. Used as a purgative.

[33]: Reading *sukham* for *mukham*. See preceding note.

[34]: The text has *cetakiyā haritakīpṛdbālā*. *Cetakiyā* must be interpreted as an adjective formation equivalent to *caitya*. *Prabālā* is Senart's conjecture for the *pravānā* of the MSS. Possibly however, the right reading is *pravaṇa* or BSk. *pavana* in the sense of "wood" (see vol. 2, p. 328, *n.* 3), and the whole phrase should be *cetakiyaṃ haritakīpravaṇam* (or *-pavanam*). The translation has been made on this assumption.

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