

A Study of Utterance in Buddhist Literature

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Abstract

The paper entitled “A Study of Utterance in Buddhist Literature” is presented in three parts – introduction, body of the text and conclusion. Udāna is the utterance prompted by intense joy. The persons who uttered exultations were the Buddha, Pacceka Buddha and *Sāvakas*. Buddha’s utterances are exemplified by drawing out from the Udāna, Dhammapada and Mahāvagga of Vinaya-ṭīṭaka. As to Pacceka Buddha’s utterance, the *gāthā* from the Khaggavisāna Sutta of the Suttanipāta is presented. In showing the Udāna utterance of Sāvaka and person are drawn out from the Udāna.

Keywords: *udāna*, *gāthās*, Buddha, Pacceka Buddhas, *Sāvakas*.

Introduction

Udāna is one of the nine constituent parts of the ṭīṭaka. The nine constituent parts are (1) *sutta*, (2) *geyya*, (3) *veyyākarana*, (4) *gāthā*, (5) *udāna*, (6) *itivuttaka*, (7) *jātaka*, (8) *abbhuta dhamma*, and (9) *vedalla*.²

The *Udāna* consists of eight *vaggas*, viz, *Bodhivagga*, *Mucalindavagga*, *Nandavagga*, *Meghiyavagga*, *Soṇavagga*, *Jaccandha- vagga*, *Cūlavagga*, and *Pāṭaligāmiyavagga*. As each *vagga* is constituted of ten *suttas*, there are a total of 80 *vaggas*. The total number of *gāthās* in the Nidāna is 95.³

Udāna is usually uttered by the Buddhas, *Pacceka Buddhas*, and *Sāvakas* (disciples) of the Buddha according to the records of *Pāṭigāthās*. Out of the three *Ṗīṭakas*, the Udāna is included in the Suttanta-ṭīṭaka. The Udāna is the third text in the Khuddaka-nikāya which comprises 15 texts.

In the *Udāna*, the Buddha’s utterances are described in *Pāṭigāthās*. The subject matters concerning with utterances are described in prose. Therefore the *Udāna* contains both verse and prose.

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² Udāna Aṭṭhakathā, 4.

³ Ibid.

1. The Term Udāna

The Pāli word “*udāna*” is a combination of *ud* + \sqrt{an} + *a*. “*Ud*” is a prefix meaning “up”. \sqrt{An} means “to breathe.” “*A*” is a noun-forming suffix. “*Udāna*” conveys the meanings – exultation, joyous word, utterances, concise words, joyous utterances, the words spilled out with the force of rapture.¹

Udāna is expounded as the words of joyous exultation in the *Udāna Aṭṭhakathā*. They are the words which are expressed vocally. Utterances prompted by intense joy is also called *udāna*. *Udāna* is the vocal expression instigated by the force of rapture. This will be explained with an example. There is a measuring cup for measuring the capacity of oil. Just as when the measuring cup cannot hold all the oil, the oil flows over the rim of the cup, when the intense joy cannot be held in one’s feelings in one’s mind and words spill out to express the feelings.

The words such as “*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā*” cannot be contained in one’s heart and are let out of the mouth with the impulse of rapture as a vocal expression. It is called as *udāna*. It is not called *udāna* if the utterances are made in favour of the listeners. *Udāna* is free from listeners. It is a true *udāna* when utterances are made impartial to listeners. As *udāna* is not intended for a listener, it does not need *dhamma* listener.²

2. Two Factors Causing Udāna

(1) *Udāna* is caused by unadulterated satisfaction.

(2) *Udāna* is caused by the maturity of apprehension from realization of the conditioned physical and mental phenomena. These *udānas* are presented in the form of verse and prose.³

3. Two Kinds of Udāna

The first kind of *udāna* is ‘*manasā udāna*’ (mental utterance) and the second kind of *udāna* ‘*vacasā udāna*’ (vocal utterance). The Buddha mentally uttered joyously the *gāthās* beginning with “*Anekajāti saṃsāraṃ*” when he attained *Sabbaññuta Buddhahood*.⁴

Anekajāti saṃsāraṃ, sandhāvissaṃ anibbisam.

Gahakāraṃ gavesanto, dukkhā jāti punappunam.

¹ Hoke Sein, 1954, 214.

² *Udāna Aṭṭhakathā*, 2.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Khuddaka-nikāya*, Vol.1, 36.

*Gahakāraka diṭṭhosi, puna gehaṃ na kāhāsi
Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā, gahakūtaṃ visaṅkhatam.
Visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ taṅhānaṃ khayamajjhagā.*

“Through many births I wandered in *Samsāra*, seeking, but not finding, the builder of the house. Sorrowful is to be born again and again.

Oh! house-builder! You shall build no more house again. All your rafters are broken. Your ridge-pole is shattered. My mind has attained the unconditioned. Achieved is the end of craving.”

After becoming a *Sammāsaṃbuddha* the Buddha sat under the *Bodhi* tree and enjoyed *vimuttisukha paṭisaṃvedi*, contemplated the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* and then vocally uttered *gāthā* beginning with “*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā.*” This *udāna* is called “*vacasā udāna.*” It conveys the meaning “Having great diligence, the thirty-seven Enlightenment factors appear to the person who has extinguished the moral defilements and excluded all the *duccaritas*. All sceptical doubts have been cleared and all causative factors are truly comprehended.”¹

4. Persons Who Utter *Udānas*

There are three kinds of person who utter *udānas*. They are (1) the Buddhas, (2) *Pacceka Buddhas* and (3) *Sāvakas*.

The Buddhas’ utterances are in the form of verse and prose. The utterances of the Buddhas are in the form of *gāthā* in the *Udāna*. There are a total of 95 *gāthās* in the *Udāna*. Only some of these *gāthās* will be presented.

*Sukho viveko tuṭṭhassa, sutadhammassa passato.
Abyāpajjaṃ sukhaṃ loke, pāṇabūtesu saṃyamo.*

“Having contentment, the Arahant person who comprehends all dhammas is blissful. In this world it is blissful not to get angry and to restrain oneself from tormenting others.”²

*Sukhā virāgatā loke, kāmānaṃ samatikkamo.
Asmimānassayo vinayo, etaṃ ve paramaṃ sukhaṃ.*

¹ *Khuddaka-nikāya*, Vol. I, 77-78.

² *Ibid.*, 88.

“In this world, lack of craving after overcoming sensuality is blissful. Conquering one’s conceit is indeed the noblest bliss.”¹

These are the *udānas* included in *Mucalindasutta* in the *Mucalindavagga*. After becoming a Buddha, the Buddha sat cross-legged on the bank of *Nerañjarā* River while absorbed in *phalasangāhī* concentration at one sitting. Out of season, the rain fell heavily. *Nāga* King, *Mucalinda* got out of his mansion protected the Buddha from contact with heat, cold, gnat, mosquito, wind, snake, scorpion, nits, etc. by keeping the Buddha in its coil, and by roofing the head of the Buddha with its immense hood. When seven days had passed, *Nāga* King, knowing the sky was cloudless, uncoiled itself and assumed the form of a youth paying homage to the Buddha. On this occasion, the Buddha joyously uttered the two verses mentioned above.²

Dadato puññaṃ pavaḍḍhati, Saṃyamato veraṃ na cīyati.

Kusalo ca jahāti pāpakaṃ, Rāgadosamohakkhayā sanibbuto.

“The merit increases to the donor. There can be no enmity to one who restrains oneself. The one with wisdom discards evil deed. The one who discards evils is tranquil as he is free from *rāga* (lust), *dosa* (anger) and *moha* (delusion).”³

This *udāna* is extracted from the *Cundasutta* of the *Udāna*. While the Buddha was staying at the Mango Grove of Cunda, the son of a goldsmith of Pāvā city in the Malla Kingdom, Cunda offered alms-food to the Buddha and the *Samgha*.

In travelling from Pāvā to Kusinārā, the Buddha was afflicted with dysentery with discharge of blood. Venerable Ānanda supplicated to the Buddha that the people think that the dysentery was due to eating of tender pork offered by Cunda. The Buddha told Ānanda that Cunda’s alms-food was as greatly beneficial as the gruel of rice with milk offered by Sujātā. The Buddha urged Ānanda to tell Cunda wealthy man the great benefit of offering alms-food. Therefore the Buddha uttered joyous utterances such as “The merit increases to the donor,” etc.

*Aññāsi vata bho koṇḍañño, Aññāsi vata bho koṇḍañño.*⁴

“Oh! Monks! Koṇḍañña has become the one who has realized the Dhamma. Oh! Monks! Koṇḍañña has become the one who has realized the Dhamma.”

¹ Khuddaka-nikāya, Vol. I, 88.

² *Ibid.*, 87-88.

³ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁴ *Udāna Atthakathā*, 3.

This is the *udāna* extracted from Bodhikathā in *Mahāvagga* of *Vinaya Piṭaka*. After becoming an omniscient Buddha, the Buddha took a journey to Migadāya (Deer Park) and delivered the *Dhammacakka* to the *Pañcavaggiyas*.

Regarding the *udāna* included in the *Dhammacakkapavattanasutta*, the commentator Venerable Dhammapāla put in a notable remark. “This *udāna* can be heard by living beings from a hundred thousand world systems. It reverberates to all parts the world systems. Koṇḍañña was the first person out of the disciples who attained the *Ariyamagga* at the end of the sermon. This utterance came out of the Buddha due to his satisfaction regarding the result of preaching dhamma. One *gāthā* will be presented to show how *Pacceka Buddhas* uttered joyous utterances.

“*Sabbesu bhutesu nidhāya daṇṭaṃ, Avihethayaṃ aññatarampi tesam.*
Na puttamiccheyya, kuto sahāyaṃ, Eko care khaggavisāna kappo.”

“All the living beings are able to drop arms such as sticks, spears, swords, etc. and restrain themselves from harming others. They also attain *Paccekabodhi-ñāṇa*. As they have no wish for children, they will not wish for companions. One practises *dhamma* solitarily like the example of a rhinoceros with a single horn.”

This *gāthā* is the *udāna* of a *Pacceka Buddha* from the *Khaggavisāṇasutta* in the *Suttanipāta*. This sutta contains 41 *udāna gāthās*. *Sāvaka Udāna* is of three kinds, namely, *Thera-udāna*, *Therī-udāna*, and *Upāsaka-udāna*. Out of them, the example of *Thera-udāna* from the *Theragāthā* will be presented.

Sabbo rāgo pahino me, sabbo doso samūhato.
Sabbo me vigato moho, sītibhūtosmi nibbuto.

“I have eliminated all forms of *raga* (lust). I have uprooted all forms of *dosa* or anger. I have destroyed all forms of *moha* or delusion. I have attained tranquility as I extinguish all moral defilements in living world.”

This *udāna* is the joyous utterance exulted by *Rakkhita Thera* as shown in the *Aṭṭhamavagga* of the *Theragāthā*.

Here is an example of *Therī-udāna*:
Kāyena saṃvutā āsiṃ, vācāya uda cetasā,
Samūlaṃ taṇhamabbuyha, sītibhūtāsmi nibbutā.

“I have uprooted *taṇhā* (craving) together with the root and have physically and mentally restrained myself. I am dwelling in tranquility as the fire of defilement has been extinguished in the world of living beings.”

This *udāna* or utterance is the *udāna gāthā* uttered by Uttarā Therī in the Therīgāthā.

Regarding the joyous utterances of lay persons, the joyous utterance of a Brāhmaṇa will be presented first.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.

“The Buddha is free from belief in, binding of, sinking in, being enchanted by, and swallowing by sensual desire and free from belief in, binding of, sinking in, being enchanted by and being swallowed by attachment to false doctrine. I pay homage to the Buddha who is worthy of special veneration and who knows all the knowable *dhammas*.”

Ārāmaḍaṇṭa Brahmin, putting upper robe on the left shoulder while standing, and placing his right knee on the ground and paid homage to the Buddha by directing his cupped hands towards the direction of the Buddha and uttered the above utterance three times.

Conclusion

In this research paper, Words of exultation are usually uttered by the Buddhas, *Pacceka Buddhas*, and Buddhas’ *Sāvakas*. They are uttered when the knowledge of the apprehension of the cycle of rebirths is mature. They can be uttered by everybody. Exultant uttering is made when one is highly pleased or when one’s knowledge of the apprehension of *Samsāra* is mature. Exultation is also made when one perceives the physical and mental phenomena or because of great compassion or inspiration. Joyous exultations are found to be collectively described in a large number in the *Udāna*. Some of these are presented in this paper.

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