

## *Bhattachāle upaṭṭhite*: An Example of a “Mistranslation” in the Pāli Canon

**Yajima Michihiko**

The phrase from the Pāli canon to be considered here was once the subject of some discussion in the debate surrounding H. Oldenberg’s “Ākhyāna theory.” To be more precise, the discussion was not about the interpretation of the phrase *per se*, but concerned, so to speak, its contextual congruity. In the following, I will first briefly review Oldenberg’s and R.O. Francke’s arguments and then offer a fresh perspective for the solution of a yet unresolved problem.

The Pāli Jātakas preserve ancient Indian prosimetric literature in its ancient form, and it goes without saying that they served as important evidence in support of Oldenberg’s Ākhyāna theory. But the prose sections preserved in the commentaries are quite late in origin and do not preserve the original prose of the early Ākhyānas. This was self-evident to Oldenberg, but Francke refused to accept this temporal gap between the verse and prose of the Jātakas, and considered the relationship between the two to be quite close. As an example illustrative of this close relationship, he cites two Jātakas (J 539: *Mahājanaka-jātaka* and J 507: *Mahāpolabhana-jātaka*) which both contain the phrase with which we are here concerned.

In J 539<sup>1</sup> the Mahāsatta enters the town of Thūṇa, begging for alms, and comes to the house of an arrow-maker. This section is in prose, and it is followed by a verse (v. 163), the first line of which reads: “In the house of an arrow-maker (*koṭṭhake usukārassa*) when mealtime had arrived (*bhattachāle upaṭṭhite*).” This would appear to be a subordinate clause, but there is no main clause, and it does not constitute a proper sentence. It was this “incompleteness” with which Francke took issue, In the case of J 507,<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, the phrase

*bhatakāle upatthite* forms together with the foregoing words (*so tassa gehaṃ pāvekkhi*), a complete sentence (“When mealtime had arrived, he entered his house”). Francke,<sup>3</sup> upon comparing the two, concluded that the incomplete line in the former has in fact its main clause not in the verse but in the preceding prose words (*pavisitvā ...gehadvāraṃ patto*). He asserts, moreover, that this is an example of an element belonging to the prose being wrongly placed in the verse and represents clear proof that Jātaka verses were influenced by the existing prose of the Jātakas.

Oldenberg,<sup>4</sup> on the other hand, argues that the problematic phrase in J 539 was not misplaced as a result of prose influence, and he makes the following points. First, the ascetic, according to the customs of the Indian ascetics, arrived at the arrow-maker’s house “to beg for food.” Therefore, even though the expression may be incomplete, there is nothing unnatural about its presence in the verse. Furthermore, the fact that a brahmin or *samaṇa* goes to beg of a householder “when mealtime has arrived” is also mentioned in the *Suttanipāta* (Sn 130),<sup>5</sup> and it is indeed quite probable that this phrase derives from the well-known words of the “Vasala-sutta” in the latter and was applied to a similar situation in the Jātakas. He suggests that this incomplete expression is the result of its having been adduced from another work.

Such are the arguments of the two scholars. First, there can be no doubt that Francke’s views have potential importance when considering the secondary character of Jātaka verses, for verses are sometimes modified in conjunction with changes to the narrative, and in such cases the verses can be said to be clearly under the influence of the prose. But is this so in the present case? Oldenberg, on the other hand, convinced of the more recent origins of the Jātaka prose, rejects Francke’s hypothesis, but his explanation lacks somewhat in persuasiveness, and his method of seeking the reason for the

said phrase's incompleteness in its having been borrowed from the well-known words of an early verse is not entirely convincing.

Now, grammatically speaking, the phrase in question (*bhattachāle upatthite*) is made up of two words both in the locative case, and together they form a locative absolute construction which might be translated as "when mealtime has arrived/come." Neither Francke nor Oldenberg questions the interpretation of the phrase itself, and their arguments are premised on this shared understanding of its meaning. It is true that there would appear to be no problems with this interpretation, and it would in fact seem to be the one and only possible interpretation. But this is only so if one considers it within the confines of "Pāli." What would happen if we were to remove this limitation? This question has never been posed in the past, but in the present case it is, I believe, an extremely important question to ask for resolving the point at issue.

In a note accompanying his response to Francke, Oldenberg makes the following comment:<sup>6</sup> "I note in passing that this description seems to have suffered while being handed down. Before or after the hemistich *koṭṭhake*, etc., there will have been a hemistich to which *koṭṭhake* structurally belongs—say, with an *aṭṭhāsi*, as the Commentary has it." One is, of course, at liberty to posit any such extra element. But even if there originally was such an element, there is no way of ascertaining this, and it is in the end nothing more than pure speculation. That being so, could it not be said to be more realistic to abandon any search for some such lost element and to instead consider the possibility that the incompleteness of the said phrase is, for instance, due to an error—that is, a "mistranslation"—that occurred in the course of its translation into Pāli?

In his study of the language of the original Buddhist canon, H. Lüders lists various instances of the apparent misinterpretation of the nominative singular *-e* when it was

transposed from an eastern language into Pāli.<sup>7</sup> In the present case too it should be quite possible to regard the word *upaṭṭhite* as an example of the nominative singular *-e* in an eastern language having been mistaken for a locative and so mistranslated into Pāli. In other words, the final *-e* was originally a nominative singular, but it was misinterpreted as a locative and hence the form *upaṭṭhite* has survived. If we assume that this was the case, then the phrase *bhattakāle upaṭṭhite* becomes a “complete” sentence meaning “he arrived [at the house of an arrow-maker] at mealtime,” and the apparent incompleteness of this expression can be explained in a quite reasonable fashion.

That this use of the past participle of the verb *upa-sthā* in an active sense is fundamental to the said expression can in fact be readily ascertained from extant sources. For instance, with regard to Sn 130, alluded to by Oldenberg, the commentary *Paramatthajotikā* mentions the variant reading *upaṭṭhitam* (‘arrived’).<sup>8</sup> Not only is this reading logical in terms of sentence structure, but its validity is also supported by the corresponding Chinese translations.<sup>9</sup> All previous translations of the *Suttanipāta*, including the relatively recent translation by K.R. Norman, have followed the reading *upaṭṭhite*, but this verse should probably be translated in accordance with the variant given in the *Paramatthajotikā* as follows: “Whoever...a brahman or a *samaṇa* who has arrived at mealtime...” If the word in question was originally an accusative in *-am*, from where then would the reading *-e* in the *Suttanipāta* have come? It is probable that the borrowing occurred in the direction opposite to that posited by Oldenberg. That is to say, it is the secondary form *-e* in the *Suttanipāta* that was borrowed from a verse in the *Jātakas* or some other work or else “rewritten” by the author who happened to call it to mind.

It should be noted in passing that statements to the effect that a mendicant “arrived” (past particle of *upa-sthā*) at mealtime are also found in Jaina scriptures.<sup>10</sup> What is more, their metre

(*śloka*), position (*uvaṭṭhie/uvaṭṭhio* take up the final four syllables of a *pāda*), and so on coincide with the situation in Pāli, thus hinting at the antiquity of this expression.

In the above I have presented my views on a phrase once discussed in the context of the debate about Ākhyāna, and if the above hypothesis is correct, the material adduced in order to refute Oldenberg's Ākhyāna hypothesis turns out to have been completely wide of the mark. At the same time, Oldenberg's theory ends up being even more firmly vindicated.

### NOTES

1. J No. 539 (Vol. VI): *Pavisitvā ca pana Mahāsatto piṇḍāya caranto usukārassa gehadvāraṃ patto,...* v. 163  
*koṭṭhake usukārassa bhattachāle upaṭṭhite*  
*tatra ca so usukāro ekañ ca cakkhu niggayha*  
*jimham ekena pekkhati.*
2. J No. 507 (Vol. IV), v. 19:  
*ath' ettha isi-m-āgañchi samuddam upar ūpari,*  
*so tassa gehaṃ pāvekkhi bhattachāle upaṭṭhite.*
3. ZDMG63, no. 13.
4. H. Oldenberg, "The Prose-and-Verse Type of Narrative and the Jātakas" ("The Ākhyāna Type and the Jātakas"; "Two Essays on Early Indian Chronology and Literature" [trans. from German], Part II), *JPTS* 1912, pp. 19-50, esp. pp. 23-26.
5. Sn 130; *yo brāhmaṇam vā samaṇam vā bhattachāle upaṭṭhite*  
*roseti vācā na ca deti, taṃ jaññā 'vasalo' iti.*
6. *JPTS* 1912, p.25, n.2.
7. H. Lüders, *Beobachtungen über die Sprache des buddhistischen Urkanons* (Berlin, 1954), §§12-19 (Nom. Sg. auf -e falsch aufgefaßt).

8. Pj: *bhatakāle upaṭṭhite ti bhojanakālejāte; upaṭṭhitan ti pi pāṭho. bhatta-kāle āgatan ti attho.*
9. (1) 沙門婆羅門 如法來乞求  
 呵責而不與 當知領群特 (Taishō II, No. 102, p. 29a)
- (2) 沙門及與婆羅門 貧窮乞匄請向家  
 不與飲食亦不施 如是亦名旃陀羅  
 (Taishō II, No. 268, p. 468a)
10. Utt 12.3cd: *bhikkhaṭṭhā bambhaijjaṃmi jannavāde uvaṭṭhio*  
 Utt 25.5cd: *Vijayaghosassa jannaṃmi bhikkhaṭṭhā uvaṭṭhie*

1142, Yamagawa-cho  
 Ashikaga-shi 326002  
 (JAPAN)