

# MALLI KĀ

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One of the best known commentaries on the 'Four Medical Tantras', the *rGyud.bḥi*, is the *Vaidūrya sḥon.po* written by the De.srid Saḥs.rgyas rgya.mtsho during the 17th century. Its full title is: *gSo.ba.rig.pa'i.bstan.bcos.sḥan.bla'i.dgoḥs rgyan.rgyud bḥi'i.gsal.byed.bal.dur.sḥon.po'i.malli.ka*. 'The blue lapis lazuli jasmine ornament to remember the Medicine Buddha's teaching of medicine explaining the Four Tantras.' At least, this is the title of part one. The other three parts bear the same title up to and including *sḥon.po'i*, but instead of *malli.ka* they have *phreḥ.bā*. Now, *phreḥ.bā* means 'rosary'. This rosary consists of *sḥon.po*, 'blue', *bal.dur* or *vaidūrya*,<sup>1)</sup> that is, 'lapis lazuli' or 'beryl', 'cat's eye', or aquamarine'. As I have argued in my paper called *Vaidūrya*, in this context the word does not mean a specific gem as much as simply 'something very precious'. Thus, it is a rosary consisting of very precious stones. The word *phreḥ.bā* in the three other parts looks as if it replaced the *malli.ka* of the first part. What is this *malli.ka*?

The word is obviously a borrowing from the Sanskrit. What does it mean? The Sanskrit and the Pali words *mallikā* usually mean 'jasmine'. The word occurs as early as in the *Mahābhārata* and many more times in Sanskrit literature. The word did not enter the Tibetan language as a loan word through medical texts. The *rGyud.bḥi* usually provides Tibetan words for plants with healing properties. There are very few

borrowings from the Sanskrit such as *so.ma.ra.dza* 'cannabis' and *pi.pi.liñ* 'pepper'. The word *mali.ka* is not amongst them, so it is to be concluded that whatever it means, for instance, 'jasmine', does not have healing properties. If the word did not enter the title of the sDe.srid's work from medical literature where did it come from ?

One of the possibilities is the work on the art of Poetics by Dandin called *Kāvya-darśa* which was a prescribed text in Gelugpa colleges. Dandin, Sanskrit Dandi, whose Tibetan name is *dByug.pa.can*, lived from the 6th to the 7th century. His 'Mirror of Poetry' was translated into Tibetan by *Srī Lakṣmīkara* and *Soñ.ston* in a Sa.skya monastery of Western Tibet, and edited by *dPal.lān bLo.gros.brta.n.pa.*

The passage where *mali.ka* occurs belongs to the second section of the *sñan.dñags.kyi.me.loñ* which is called *Don.gyi rgyan*, 'Embellishments in the interpretation'. Verse 214 says: 'The desire to describe a characteristic in a manner transcending worldly limits is [giving rise to] Hyperbole; it is the best of figures.' For example: 215: "Wearing wreaths of *mali.kā*, all their body anointed with fresh sandal and clad in linen garments the assignation-seekers are not to be distinguished in the moonlight." 216: 'Here is asserted, as being of a pre-eminent degree, the abundance of the moonlight.<sup>2)</sup>' The hyperbole consists in stating that the moonlight was so bright that the different people moving in it could not be distinguished. The word *mali.kā* here means 'jasmine'.

The Tibetan translation of the *Kāvya-darśa* passage reads as follows:

Verse 214: *mali.ka.yi.phreñ.tshogs.can ;*

*lus.kun.khyab.pa'i.tsandan.gsher ;*

dkar.ba'i.gos.can.mñon.'gro.ma ;  
zla.ba'i.'od.la.mtshon.ma.yin ;;

Verse 215: zla.ba'i.'od.ni.lhag.pa.ñid ;  
khyad.'phags.ldan.brjod.de.bžin.du ;  
the.tshom.phul.byuñ.la.sogs.kyañ ;  
gsal.phyir.cuñ.zad.bstan.par.bya ;;

Verse 216: dga'.ma.khyod.kyi.nu.ma.dañ ;  
dpyi.yi.bar.na.skyed.pa.ni ;  
yod.dañ.med.ces.bdag.gi.ni ;  
the.tshom.da.duñ.zlog.ma.gyur ;;

The <sup>4)</sup> *Kāvya*darsa translation has been included in the Tanjur.  
Though this textbook of Poetics was a setbook in Gelugpa colleges, this passage does not have anything to do with Buddhism. It seems therefore to be worthwhile to look for another wellknown text which might have introduced the word *mallikā* into the Tibetan language. Indeed, such a text can be found. It is the *Udānavarga*, a Sanskrit work containg portions of the *Dhammapada*, a very popular work in Pali. While the *Dhammapada* was a postcanonical work, the Tibetan translation of the *Udānavarga* is part of the Kanjur and presumably was part of the Sanskrit *Tripitaka*. It was compiled in Sanskrit by *Dharmatrata* (Tibetan Chos.skyob) between 75 B.C. and 200 A.D. and translated into Tibetan by *Vidyāprabhākara* and *Lotsava Rin.chen. mchog* and finally arranged by *dPal.brtsegs* in the 9th century.

The relevant *Dhammapada* passage occurs in verse 11 of the chapter called 'Flowers' which is chapter 4. It is verse 54 of the whole of the *Dhammapada*: 'The perfume of flowers blows not against the wind nor does the fragrance of sandal-

wood, tagara and jasmine. The fragrance of the virtuous does blow against the wind; the virtuous man pervades every direction.<sup>5)</sup> What is meant is the atmosphere of peace and friendliness surrounding the people whose mind is concentrated on the spiritual side of life. The word 'jasmine' here translates Pali *mālikā*. In the next verse, 12( 55), the word does not occur in the Pali version but it does in the Tibetan one. I, therefore, will give a translation of the Pali first: 'Sandalwood, Tagara, lotus, jasmine (here the Pali word *vassikī* is used for 'jasmine' instead of *mālikā*), - of all these kinds of fragrance, the perfume of virtue is by far the best.'

The Tibetan adaptation in the Udānavarga reads as follows:<sup>6)</sup>  
<sup>7)</sup> 'The scent of flowers does not move without being directed by the wind, (me.tog.dri.ni.rdzi.phyogs.min.mi.'gro)! nor does that of roots, Tagara or Sandalwood (rtsa.ba.rgya.spos.tsan.dan.rnams.kyañ.min).!  
<sup>8)</sup> The holy scent moves without being directed by the wind (dam.pa'i.dri.ni.rdzi.phyogs.min.'gro.ste).!  
 The virtuous man pervades all directions' (phyogs.rnams.kun.tu mi.mchog.dri.yis.khyab).!

The word for 'jasmine' occurs in the next stanza:  
 'Tagara and sandalwood, (rgya.spos.dañ.ni.tsan.dan.dañ) blue lotus and jasmine (ut.pa.la.dañ.[ed. Beckh] *ma.li.kā*, [Peking Kanjur, Otani] *ma.li.ki*):  
 better than these kinds of incense (spos.kyi.rigs.ni.'di.dag pas)!  
 (Beckh and sNar.thañ Tanjur:) the scent of discipline comes as a fragrant offering, (tshul.krims.dri.bsuf.phul.du.phyin)!  
 (Peking Tanjur:) the scent of keeping the discipline comes as an offering (tshul.khrims.dri.bsruñ.phul.du.phyin).!!

It would be very plausible that the sDe.srid if he composed the title of the *Vaidurya sNon.po* himself borrowed the word from the Tibetan Udānavarga. However, the form used there is *ma.li.ka* or *ma.li.ki* and not *māli.ka*. There is another passage in a work composed in the Pali language, namely the *Hatthavanagallavihāravamsa*, the lineage or history of the Elephant Rocky Forest Temple in Ceylon, composed during the reign of Pandita Parakramabāhu of Dambadeniya (1266-1301 A.D.), which contains a passage where the word *mālika* occurs, this time with a long first a and a single l:

'The slander darts of the wicked become blunted (on reaching) the shield of forebearance of the righteous and are changed into the flowers of praise (bestowed) in the society (of the just); whence they become bound with the flowery chaplets <sup>10)</sup> (*mālika*) of their virtues.' This refers to the practice of

adorning people with wreaths or garlands as marks of respect. Here the word does no longer mean 'jasmine' but 'chaplet' or 'garland', it being the diminutive form of *māla*. Association with this word which is the same in Sanskrit as in Pali may have caused the sDe.srid or whoever composed these titles to use *phreṅ.ba* in the titles of the other three volumes. <sup>11)</sup> The fact remains that the first volume of the *Vaidurya sNon.po* uses the word *māli.ka* in its title and not *ma.li.ka*.

Therefore the idea for it does probably not come from the *Udānavarga* but from Dandin's work, while the titles of the other three volumes may have been influenced by the thought of *ma.li.ka*.

In Prakrit *mālikā* can mean, apart from the jasmine plant and flower, an earthenware vessel of a particular shape, Sanskrit *māllaka* from, which compounds with *mālika* <sup>12)</sup> are

formed can also mean a lampstand or a lamp. Though the shape is not specified it is probably that of a jasmine blossom. In Sinhalese it means a vessel made of a coconut shell for containing oil.<sup>13)</sup> This seems to suggest that the vessels received their names because of the association with scented oil reminding of jasmine blossoms. But it is unlikely that the meaning 'vessel' was in the mind of the sDe.srid Sañs.rgyas rGya.mtsho.

- 1) Studies on Indian medical history, ed. Meulenbeld and Wujastyk, Groningen Oriental Studies, vol.2, 1987, pp.91-101.
- 2) Kāvya-darśa of Dandin. Sanskrit and English translation by S.K. Belvalkar. Poona, Oriental Booksupplying Agency. 1924, p.33.
- 3) Kāvya-darśa. Sanskrit and Tibetan texts edited by Anukul Chandra Banerjee. University of Calcutta. 1939, pp.140-141.
- 4) The Tibetan Tripitaka. Peking Edition. Edited by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. Tokyo-Kyoto, Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute. sGra.rig.pa. Volume 140, No.5789. p.188, stanza 141b, line 5 - p.189, stanza 142a, line 1.
- 5) Translated by Nārada Mahāthera, Calcutta, Mahabodhi Society, 1976, p.41.
- 6) Translated from the Sanskrit into Tibetan by Chos.skyob, Vidyāprabhākara and Rin.chen.mchog. Revised by dPal.brtsegs during the 9th century.
- 7) sNar.thañ Tanjur, vol.mDo 71, f.11b, lines 1-2; also ed. Hermann Beckh, Berlin, G. Reimer, 1911, p.26, item VI, 14-15. Also Tibetan Tripitaka, Peking ed. by D.T. Suzuki, reprinted under the supervision of the Otani University, Kyoto, vol.39, item 992, no.6:tshul.khrims, p.92, f.225a, line 8 to f.225b, line 1. Also Sel.mkhar MS Kanjur, folio 142a5-a8. This MS Kanjur at the British Library is going to be described in detail by the Ven. Lama Chi.med Rinpoche, Curator of Tibetan Manuscripts and Xylographs at the British Library, in the near future.
- 8) What is meant are the five medicinal roots: 1) ra.mñe (Polygonatum officinale), 2) lca.ba (Selinum tenuifolium), 3) ñe.śiñ (Polygonatum falcatum), 4) 'a.śo.ga.ndha (Asparagus lucidus), 5) gze.ma (Tribulus terrestris).
- 9) Attanagalu-Vansa, ed. and trl.J. d'Alwis, 2nd ed., 1887.

10) The Attanagalu-Vansa translated by J. d'Alwis. Colombo, William & Norgate, 1866. Chapter II, paragraph 10, on p.26.

11) I am indebted to Mr. K.D. Somadasa of the British Library for explaining to me that the word in this context could not

mean 'jasmine' but had to mean something like 'garland' because the word 'bound with' is literally used in the Pali text.

12) Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1899, p.793, cols.1 and 2; A.A. Macdonell, *A practical Sanskrit Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 1929, reprinted 1954, p.220, col.1.

13) Benjamin Clough, *Sinhalese-English dictionary*, Colombo, 1892. p.464, col.1.