

**Makers of Indian Literature**

# AŚVAGHOṢA

**Roma Chaudhuri**



**Sahitya Akademi**

**Aśvaghōṣa (80AD -150 AD)**, one of the earliest known poets and dramatists in Sanskrit, was a many-sided genius—a monk and a missionary, a philosopher and a theologian, a grammarian and a linguist—all combined into a great creative writer.

A devout follower of the Buddha, Aśvaghōṣa wrote delectable ornate Kavyas for popularising Buddha's teachings. With his deep insight and understanding and broad outlook, he could express subtle philosophical ideas in a manner that made his writing at once illuminating and pleasing.

Aśvaghōṣa was a great orator and spoke in great details about the Buddhist doctrine and its principles. He could easily explain complex concepts of Mahayana Buddhism. His famous works include *Mahayana-sraddhotpada-sastra*, which means Awakening of faith in Mahayana, *Buddhacharita* or Life of Buddha and *Mahalankara* or the Book of Glory. He also wrote a poem called *Saundarananakavya*. It was about the conversion of Nanda (Buddha's half brother) to Buddhism in order to attain salvation.

**Roma Chaudhuri (1912-1990)** the author of this monograph and former Vice-Chancellor, Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta, was an erudite scholar. She has authored a large number of research works and articles in English, Bengali and Sanskrit. She has written about 20 modern Sanskrit dramas. Her *Pallikamala* (a play in nine acts, 1969) is noteworthy for its love of nature and unspoiled life.



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Aśvaghōṣa

The sculpture reproduced on the end paper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Śuddhodana the dream of Queen Māyā, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

*From:* Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

*Courtesy:* National Museum, New Delhi

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**Aśvaghōṣa:** A monograph in English on Aśvaghōṣa, an eminent Indian philosopher and poet by Roma Chaudhuri, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi: 2017, ₹ 50.

**Sahitya Akademi**

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Bengaluru 560 001

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*Chennai Office*

Main Guna Building Complex (second floor), 443, (304)  
Anna Salai, Teynampet, Chennai 600 018

First Published: 1988

Reprint: 2017

© Sahitya Akademi

ISBN: 978-81-260-5328-5

Rs. 50

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## Prologue

In the case of ancient literature, it is often found that practically no information regarding the author of a work is available—such as, his parentage, dates of birth and death, details of his life, activities and achievements and the like.

The same is the case with *Aśvaghōṣa*, the earliest known poet and dramatist of classical Indian literature. But his supreme contribution to Sanskrit literature will make us remember him always with deepest affection, reverence and appreciation, even when we lack a full and correct knowledge regarding him in other respects.

ROMA CHAUDHURI



### *Parentage*

As pointed out in the prologue, not much is known about the parentage of Aśvaghōṣa—though, as often happens in the case of great personalities, legendary and traditional accounts abound. They are, however, not fully reliable. Far more reliable are the colophons at the end of his works. But strangely enough, the colophons in Aśvaghōṣa's most celebrated work *Buddha-Carita* does not contain any information about him, not even his name.

Colophons of his second most celebrated work *Saundarānanda* also does not contain any information regarding him, the only exception being its 18th or the last Sarga, which runs as follows:

Saundarānande Mahākāvye Ajñāvyaṅkararṇo Nāmāṣṭadaśaḥ  
Sargaḥ. Āryasuvarṇākṣīputrasya Sāketakasya Bhikṣorācārya-  
bhadantāśvaghōṣasya Mahākāvermahāvādinaḥ Kṛtiriyam.

The eighteenth canto of *Saundarānanda Mahākāvya*, called “Ajñāvyaṅkaraṇa”, It is the work of Aśvaghōṣa.

Here eight adjectives have been appended to his name, giving us some information about him, viz. :

1. “Ārya” – a noble and a revered person
2. “Suvarṇākṣīputra” – son of Suvarṇākṣī, the golden-eyed
3. “Sāketaka” – an inhabitant of Sāketa or Ayodhyā
4. “Bhikṣu” – a mendicant or a Buddhist monk
5. “Ācārya” – a spiritual teacher
6. “Bhadanta” – a great and a revered person or a Buddhist monk

7. “Mahākavi” – a great poet
8. “Mahāvādin” – a speaker or an exponent of great things or truths, i.e. a sound logician, an eloquent conversationalist and an expert debater.

What strikes us most here is as to why Aśvaghōṣa thought it fit to refer to his mother only, and not to his father. Perhaps, he was more fond and proud of his mother than of his father; or, perhaps, his father was already dead and so he thought it fit to refer to a living person rather than to a dead one; or perhaps, because according to the Buddhist tradition, women are held in very high esteem, even greater, in many cases, than men. One, however, feels extremely inspired and exhilarated in finding such a deep love for his mother on the part of such a well-known poet and monk.

In this same colophon, he refers to himself twice as a Buddhist monk, viz. “Bhikṣu” and “Bhadanta”, clearly indicating that he was a devout Buddhist.

It is also clear that he combines in himself the apparently self-contradictory qualities of an “Ācārya” and a “Mahākavi”—the former a spiritual teacher, mainly concerned with a dry kind of knowledge, and the latter, an eloquent poet, mainly concerned with effusive, soft, colourful emotions of an entirely different kind.

Another thing to note here is that he speaks of himself as a “Mahākavi” or a great poet and immediately thereafter as a “Mahāvādin” or a great logician. It is indeed, rare, that a great poet is also a great logician.

At the end of Aśvaghōṣa’s another work *Sāriputra-Prakaraṇa* also, there is a similar description of himself:

Ārya-Suvarṇāṣiputrasya, Ārya Aśvaghōṣasya...

However, here there is no mention of himself as a “Sāketaka” or an inhabitant of “Sāketa” or “Ayodhyā”, as in *Saundarānanda*.

There is no doubt that Aśvaghōṣa himself became a Buddhist monk, as clearly shown in the colophons to his work *Saundarānanda*. It is generally supposed that he was a Brahmin by birth and a Śāiva

by faith. That he was a Brahmin by birth, is clearly borne out by his deep knowledge of Brāhminical tenets, lores and learnings, his profound mastery of Hindu Scriptures, his extensive and repeated references to many Epic characters in the Hindu Scriptures, etc.

But he was a Brahmin converted to Buddhism, and took upon himself the difficult task of establishing his new faith at the cost of his old one.

### *Date*

Regarding the probable date of Aśvaghōṣa, fortunately, most scholars are in agreement. It is generally supposed that he flourished during the age of the great Kuṣhān King Kaṇiṣka who was a great protagonist of the 'Mahāsāñghikā' sect of Buddhism. The generally accepted date of King Kaṇiṣka is 78-150 A.D. Aśvaghōṣa has been assigned to about 100 A.D. (Upper limit-2nd century B.C., lower limit-1st century A.D.)

### *Devout Bauddha*

There is no doubt regarding the fact that Aśvaghōṣa, after his conversion to Buddhism, devoted himself heart and soul to being a true Buddhist, theoretically as well as practically. He rigorously followed the Aṣṭāñga-Mārga or the Eight-fold Noble Path of Buddhism. For his sincere efforts, he soon earned full recognition in India as well as outside, (Tibet China etc.,) and rose to be a Puṣa or a Bodhisattva. Besides Buddhism, Aśvaghōṣa was conversant with other systems of thought as well, such as early Sāṃkhya-Yoga Metaphysics (See his *Buddha-Carita*). However, his reputation as a Buddhist preacher was unparalleled in those days.

### *Preacher*

Aśvaghōṣa aspired to be not only a devout monk, but also an equally enthusiastic missionary. In his later life, he did not want the lofty Buddhist doctrines to be kept confined within himself. So, he rightly selected a universal means, viz. Literature, and made

all his works at once poetic and propagandist. Of course, it goes without saying that it was not a dry, colourless kind of propaganda, but a living and refreshing one, inspiring not only the mind, but also touching the heart; bringing not only serene knowledge, but also bliss of the soul. In other words, the poet in Aśvaghoṣa always outshone everything else in him—propagandist, philosopher, philanthropist, etc.

Aśvaghoṣa was also a teacher of Buddhist doctrines in a general sense. As we all know, Buddhism is divided into two schools, viz. Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna—the lesser vehicle and the greater vehicle respectively.

The Hīnayāna is the older School and very rigorously and faithfully follows the teachings of Lord Buddha himself. It is, therefore, strictly agnostic in character. Here, salvation or Mokṣa depends neither on divine mercy nor on any other foreign help, but on the Ideal set by Buddha and the Moral Law of the Universe.

As natural, Hīnayāna is rather narrow in scope. Besides, it is entirely individualistic in nature, not universalistic or socialistic—each working out his own destiny, his own salvation, boldly and all alone. Hence, later on it came to be stigmatised by Mahāyānis as selfish in nature—each one trying to attain his own salvation by his own efforts and being fully satisfied with the same, never thinking of others and their salvation.

Not being an ordinary religious system of over-sentimentality, effusive outpourings, overflowing reverence for Gurus, etc., there is practically no place for Śraddhā-Bhakti etc., in Buddhism in the ordinary sense of the terms. Even Buddha himself is not given the place of God and worshipped as such. He is only regarded as a Pathfinder.

Hīnayāna specially flourished in the South—in Sri Lanka, Burma and Siam.

Of the four philosophical Schools of Buddhism, the two realistic or Sarvāstivādin Schools, viz. Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika, come under the Hīnayāna system. According to these two schools, mind and matter are equally real, the difference between the two

being that according to the Sautrāntika school, mind knows matter indirectly, or external objects are to be known through inference. That is, an external object produces a corresponding idea in the mind which the mind knows directly and from that it comes to know by inference the corresponding external object causing it.

But according to the Vaibhāṣika School, an external object can be directly known or perceived, and is not inferred from its corresponding idea in the mind.

In the Mahāyāna School of Buddhism, absolute self-reliance gives way to much more dependence on others—Gurus, Śāstras, spiritual preceptors, Scriptures, etc., and it is, therefore, more suited for the masses.

It has a much wider scope, being not so rigid regarding admission and recognition, but rather welcoming all, whether actually fit or not, for being a Buddhist monk.

So, the aim of a Mahāyānin is to attain the state of a 'Bodhisattva', a state of Prajñā and Karuṇā: "Fullest Wisdom and Purest Love"—i.e. not to live aloof from the world after getting one's own salvation—but to live for all, for removing their miseries and helping them to attain salvation.

Its another special feature is the restoration of the Self. It is ordinarily supposed that Buddhism stands for the negation of the Self, which alienated quite a few away from Buddhism. But here it is said that the individual Self or Ego is, of course, entirely false, but not the real Self which lies behind it. Thus, the negated Self is restored to a Mahāyānin in a higher, fuller, and purer form.

Mahāyāna flourished in North China, Japan, Korea and Tibet.

There is no doubt that Aśvagoṣa belonged to the orthodox Hīnayāna School of Buddhism, for, the above-mentioned main characteristics of Hīnayāna are found and illustrated in his writings more or less in clear forms. But at the same time, we find in Aśvagoṣa a deep reverence for Lord Buddha himself, although he never went to the length of worshipping him as God.

In Aśvagoṣa, we also find many clear instances of a compassionate desire for inspiring, teaching, helping, serving,

reforming and uplifting others. We also find clear leanings towards religious arts or arts meant for manifesting and glorifying Religion.

Aśvaghoṣa, with a robust practical sense, a sober worldly outlook, and a serene understanding of the facts of life and its problems, never thought it fit to shut his eyes to the actualities of the world. He was never reluctant to represent these actual facts and figures, however repugnant and opposed to the strictly Monistic ideas and ideals they might have been—be it the love scenes between Nanda and Sundarī in *Saundarānanda* or the; coquetry of courtesans in *Buddha-Carita* (Cantos 4 and 5).

Aśvaghoṣa was a harmonist, trying to work out a perfect synthesis amongst all the sides of our nature—Thinking, Feeling, Willing.

From the above, it is clear that Aśvaghoṣa, though undoubtedly a Hīnayānist, was yet gradually drifting towards the first rudiments of the Mahāyāna Sect of Buddhism. In any case, he was equally loved and revered by both the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna sects for his great scholarship, deep devotion, and piety.

### *Poet*

Aśvaghoṣa was a versatile genius—a monk and a missionary, a philosopher and a theologian, a grammarian and a linguist, a rhetorician and a metrician, a musician and an instrumentalist, a Hīnayānist and a Mahāyānist, a scholar and a devotee, a poet and a dramatist. As a matter of fact, he was a perfect emblem of the grand and glorious eternal idea of Samanvaya or harmony.

Yet, when all is said and done, he was, undoubtedly, first and foremost a poet—a poet of a very high caliber, wide vision; broad outlook, deep understanding, and above all, a wonderful novelty, who could express dry biographical facts and even drier philosophical, theological, ethical theories in a beautiful manner.



As natural, with such a great fame of scholarship, Aśvaghōṣa has been credited with a large number of works. But of these, only three are taken to be absolutely authentic, viz. (i) *Buddha-Carita*, (ii) *Saundarānanda*, and (iii) *Sāriputra-Prakarāṇa*.

The world-renowned *Buddha-Carita* is Aśvaghōṣa's first and by far the best work. Unfortunately, the Sanskrit text of this invaluable work is not complete.

The standard Sanskrit text of *Buddha-Carita*, as edited by E.H. Johnston (Calcutta, 1935) runs up to 14/31 (Canto-14, Verse 31 only).

Here, too, the following are missing:

- (i) 1/1-7; 1/18-first line; 1/24-last line; 1/25-39; 1/40-first, second and third lines.
- (ii) 3/55-last line.
- (iii) 9/20-last line.
- (iv) 12/91-first and third lines.

In his English translation of *Buddha-Carita*, however, Johnston thought it fit to fill in the missing portions with the Chinese and Tibetan translations of *Buddha-Carita*.

The edition of Weller (Leipzig, 1953), contains 3/16-19 and 16/20-36 only.

The edition of Cowell (Oxford, 1893), runs up to the 17th canto. Cowell's edition contains the portions not found in Johnston's edition, viz. part of 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th cantos. These are professedly the works of Pandit Amritananda, the Nepalese Copyist and Residency Pandit of the first half of the 19th century, attached

to Hodgson. Pandit Amritananda himself admits in his concluding verse of canto 17 that when he could not find out the remaining missing portions of *Buddha-Carita*, in spite of his best efforts, he thought it fit to compose the last portion of the 14th canto after 14/31 (as found in Johnston's above Sanskrit Text edition) and the 15th, 16th and 17th cantos.

The Chinese translation, consisting of 28 cantos, is by an Indian monk Dharmakṣema, also called Dharmarakṣa or Dharmakṣara, who lived between A.D. 414 and 421. It is, however, not a literal translation, but rather a kind of elaborate paraphrasing. Therefore it is not of much use to us from the standpoint of the original work itself. Yet, it gives us, in a general manner, the sum and substance of Aśvaghoṣa's world-renowned *Buddha-Carita*. Specially, it affords a second unassailable proof of the existence of the missing cantos of *Buddha-Carita* (28 cantos totally) and a strong support to the Tibetan translation of *Buddha-Carita*.

The Tibetan translation is by Kṣitīndrabhadra or Mahīndrabhadra Matirāja (7th-8th century A.D.). It, too, like the Chinese translation consists of 28 Sargas or cantos.

Therefore there is no doubt that the original *Buddha-Carita* had as many as 28 cantos, of which the above Tibetan translation is the only preserved one in the original form.

### *Buddha-Carita*

*Buddha-Carita* begins with the extraordinary birth of Prince Siddhārtha in the forest of Lumbini. Unlike others, Buddha was not born in the ordinary way, but came out from his mother's left side without causing any pain to her. After he was born, there was great rejoicing. Among others, the great sage Asita was also present to greet the royal baby.

When he beholds him, his heart rejoices, for he sees the child as possessing all the auspicious signs. He assures the King that his son will one day bring deliverance to the whole world and the King returns to the city with great pomp and splendour.

Indeed, the auspicious prophesies of saints and sages come true, the royal child grows forth into a full-fledged prince, manifesting his inner, excellent qualities and powers to the full. And as a fitting arena of his infinite capacities and super-excellence, the whole kingdom, too, begins to prosper.

Religion wakes up in full glory and vigour, destroying all that is wicked, harmful, inauspicious and lowly.

The Prince enjoys all the worldly pleasures as befitting a royal prince.

His father King Śuddhodana, afraid that the great sage Asita's prophecy would come true, viz. that the Prince would one day be the redeemer of the whole world, tries to bind him to the chain of domestic life by marrying him to beautiful Yaśodhara, The Prince starts to lead the life of a householder with her happily and is soon blessed with a beautiful son Rāhula.

But the affectionate father, not satisfied even at this, tries to confine him within the walls of the castle by providing him objects of enjoyment of all kinds, including a bevy of the most beautiful women who try their best to entice him by their coquetry.

But alas, in spite of the best efforts of the King, the Prince, when his past Sakāma-Karmas, leading to Bhoga or indulgence in worldly sensual pleasures, come to be exhausted, wants to come out of the locked golden cage of the Royal Palace and go to a beautiful garden which he suddenly comes to hear of. The king reluctantly allows him to go—but gives the officers concerned strict orders to ensure that the roads are absolutely free from all distressed persons—old, sick, blind, mutilated or lame.

Everything goes off well in the beginning—joyous, well-dressed crowds greet the Prince most enthusiastically. The gorgeous golden chariot carrying him runs smoothly and gaily through clean, well-decorated, broad streets. But alas, gods in Heaven in their infinite mercy, wisdom and concern for all, create an old man with a bent frame on the way of the Prince. And the Prince? He is astounded—for, he has never seen such an ugly sight—an old man with white hair, wrinkled face, tottering head, shaky gait, and a bent down

threefold figure. Perturbed, the Prince asks the charioteer, “Who is this?” The charioteer thinks it fit to hide nothing and tells him frankly that it is the inevitable destiny of all—Birth-Growth-Decay (Janma-Vṛddhi-Jarā or Kṣaya)—none can escape this cycle.

When, the Prince asks “Shall this defect or fault pertain to me also?” [“Kimeṣa doṣa bhavitā mamāpityasmai?” (3/32)], prompt comes the reply—“Yes Sir, you too will be subject to the same fate.”

The Prince asks the charioteer to return home, as he has no desire to go to the pleasure garden any more.

Having lost his peace of mind by constantly thinking of Jarā or old age, the Prince again goes out into the street with his father’s permission, and this time sees a sick man, created, as before, by the gods themselves. As before, he asks the charioteer about him, who informs him that disease, too, is the inevitable fate of all worldly beings—birth involves growth, growth involves disease which finally leads to death. The Prince asks again, “Is this the destiny of all—to be disease-struck in this way?” “Yes” comes the reply.

Thoroughly depressed, the Prince returns to the Palace. But as before, not being able to rest in peace, he again wants to go out into the streets. But this time, the King gives secret instructions to the charioteer to take him straight to the pleasure garden or a forest full of the most beautiful, public women or courtesans of the city.

But, again, the gods intervene for the sake of the world at large, and now the Prince on his way to the pleasure garden comes across a corpse. When the Prince asks the wise charioteer about it, he gets the reply that Jarā-Maraṇa: Decay-Death is the universal law of worldly life—no one can escape it, however strong, rich, influential, honoured, or loved he may be.

The Prince asks again, as before, “Is it a Universal Law of the world, or meant for a few?” “A Universal Law” comes the unequivocal reply.

As before, the Prince wants to be taken back home. But as per the instructions of the King, the charioteer takes him to the pleasure garden instead.

As soon as the Prince arrives at the garden, beautiful women come and surround him. Speechless at seeing the divine beauty of the Prince, they take him to be “Kāma-Deva’ or the God of Love. But the Prince maintains such a dignified, calm and majestic demeanour that they do not dare to approach him amorously, but remain standing there, maintaining a respectable distance from him.

This distresses Udāyī, a well-wisher of the Prince, but not a very honest or a moral man. So, he admonishes the public women for their apparent inertia, hesitation and coyness.

Thus instigated, all the women, start vying with one another for winning the attention of the Prince. But nothing can move him. In the midst of all these allurements and provocations, he remains absolutely calm and aloof, for it was his past Sakāma-Karmas which forced him, so to speak, to lead a life of Bhoga or worldly enjoyments,

However, the indefatigable Udāyī is now on the war path and comes forward to instigate the Prince to agreeing to indulge in all these worldly enjoyments. Did not many ancient and respected saints and sages too, do the same? he asks him. In reply, the Prince gives him a long philosophical discourse.

When all their coquettish and amorous attempts to seduce the Prince totally fail, the courtesans return to the city, baffled and mortified.

And the King? He, too, is equally baffled and mortified and spends sleepless nights.

The Prince thus vexed by amorous courtesans, appointed by his well-meaning father, to win him over and chain him to worldly life forever, spends his days in great distress—but unable to bear it the any longer, he again seeks his father’s permission to go out to forest, accompanied by his friends. When he reaches the forest, he is pained to see the signs of distress, death and destruction all around there, too. So, he gets down from his horse, and gives himself to thoughts under a Jambu tree. Subsequently the Prince

comes to have a fuller realisation of his power of pure or correct apprehension and realisation.

One day, a monk, invisible to others, appears before him suddenly. The Prince asks him, “Who are you?” He replies, “I am a Buddhist monk. Being afraid of the thoughts of old age and death, I have given up domestic life to seek the path of salvation and embrace the life of a monk.”

The Prince at once makes up his mind to follow the same path for freeing the world from decay and death. So, he goes back to the palace to seek his father’s permission to embrace the life of a monk. Naturally, the King refuses, and as before, tries to tempt him with worldly enjoyments, and arranges for beautiful ladies to allure him to worldly life.

Here, again, we find a vivid picture of amorous ladies trying to allure and seduce the Prince as before (4/24-50).

But the Prince has already passed the iron test before in the pleasure-garden (4/24-50) and remains absolutely calm and unperturbed.

He now resolves to leave the palace that very night.

When night comes, the ever-gracious gods open the palace gates for him and he at once comes out of the palace, calls his faithful horse-boy Chandaka and asks him to make the fast moving horse Kaṇṭhaka ready. When it is thus ready, the Prince accompanied by the faithful Chandaka—leaves the palace at once.

Then, he, with eyes like spotless lotuses, glances at the city and cries out loudly :

“I shall not enter into Kapilāvastu again without seeing the end of birth and death.”

Thereupon all the gods pray fervently for the success of this great mission, and pour down moon-light on his way, to make it easy for the toiling horse to traverse.

On sunrise, the Prince arrives at the holy hermitage of the great sage Bhārgava and bids farewell to Chandaka, with a beautiful philosophical discourse.

Thereupon, the Prince, to symbolise his total and permanent abdication from the royal throne, takes off his gem-studded magnificent crown and cuts it into pieces with his sword, thereby symbolically severing all connections with his wife and royal grandeur and glories. The only relic of his Princehood is the costly white royal robe he is wearing. So, he prays for a dress fit for a hermit. In answer to his prayer, a god appears in the guise of a Vyādha dressed in the ochre garments of a hermit, and exchanges the same with the white royal dress of the Prince. Then, bidding Chandaka and Kaṇṭhaka a final farewell, he joyously enters the hermitage, while the sorrowing, weeping and lamenting Chandaka and Kaṇṭhaka return to the city reluctantly.

Thereafter, the Prince enters the hermitage, dressed as an ordinary hermit. In spite of it, he at once attracts the attention of all, including birds and beasts, because of the beauty and brilliance of his body. Busy farmers stop to plough and stare at him. Brahmins, about to go out for collecting wood for sacrifice, return to have a look at him, and though “Tapasyā” is their main duty, they forget it even for his sake. Peacocks spread out their tails and cry out in joy. Deer give up their green grazing grounds and run to him. Cows begin to pour forth milk voluntarily. All begin to wonder as to who he is with his looks like Indra, Sūrya and Aśvini Kumāras put together.

They accord him a most loving welcome. The Prince, after paying homage to all virtuous hermits assembled there, starts to fulfil his real mission—discovering the way to get rid of the birth-growth-decay-death cycle and all the consequent sufferings. So, he asks a hermit straight away regarding their Sādhanās or spiritual enterprises. But when he comes to know that their aim is Svarga or Heaven and not Mokṣa or Salvation, he at once decides to leave the place in search for that higher kind of knowledge. He is advised by another hermit to go and see Arāḍa (Arāra),

Chandaka and Kaṇṭhaka meanwhile return home, absolutely dejected, travelling the very same path in eight days which they had traversed only within a night when the Prince was with them. As

apprehended, the entire city plunges into grief on hearing this very sudden sad news—but they do not blame the pair Chandaka and Kaṇṭhaka when they come to know that the whole affair had been divinely ordained.

But the inconsolable Yasodharā accuses Chandaka of duplicity and stupidity and opines that a wise enemy is far better than a foolish friend, in spite of being told by him repeatedly that the whole thing had been ordained by the gods themselves. Otherwise, how could the palace gates, which even elephants could not open, open by themselves; how could they have reached the far-off forest within one night; how could he himself have followed, without any exertion on his part, the very fast moving horse with the Prince; how could the horse run so fast, even without touching the ground; how could the dark night be so much illuminated; how could a hermit suddenly supply the garments of a hermit to the Prince, etc. But the grief-stricken Yasodharā is not convinced.

The minister and the priest, ordered by the King, go to the forest where Chandaka and Kaṇṭhaka had left the Prince. There, they go to the house of Bhārgava and are told that the Prince, not being satisfied by the Sādhanās or spiritual strivings of the saints and sages who aspire only for Svarga or Heaven and not Mokṣa or Salvation, has gone forth to the hermitage of Arāḍa (Arāra). Thereupon they go to that hermitage and find the Prince sitting under a tree. But in spite of their vivid descriptions of the states of mind of the King, Yaśodharā and Rāhula as well as of the entire city plunged in a ocean of deepest grief, and earnest request for return, the Prince remains unmoved, absolutely firm in his previous resolution to find out the causes of human sufferings, due to birth-growth-decay-death.

After bidding farewell to the minister and the priest, the Prince goes to Rājagraha and climbs the Pāṇḍava mountain. There, the great King Bimbisāra comes and meets him most reverentially, and gives him a long discourse on the absolute necessity of enjoying life during youth, as according to the Scriptures, the four ends of life Dharma-Artha-Kāma-Mokṣa are successive in nature as follows:



Kāma (during youth), Artha (during middle age), Dharma (during old age), Mokṣa as a result (after that). So, all the stages have to be crossed one-by-one, and none can be totally skipped or ignored. The King graciously offers him half his kingdom in case he is reluctant to accept his father's and finally advises him to perform Yāga-Yajña as Dharma—which have always produced magnificent results, even in the case of gods.

In reply, the Prince also gives King Bimbisāra a long discourse on Kāma, Yajña, Rājatva, Svarga (Worldly enjoyment, Sacrifice, Kingship, Heavens) all of which are non-eternal and thus fully opposed to the one and only one end of life, viz. Mokṣa or Salvation.

When even the great sage Arāḍha (Arāra) fails to satisfy the Prince, he goes to the hermitage of Udraka. But he finds Udraka's doctrine, which omits the existence of the Soul even during Salvation, unsatisfactory, and so he leaves for Gayā, the city of Rajaṣi, or the hermit King of Gayā and there he meets five Bhikṣus or monks who come forward to serve him. Thereafter the Prince undergoes severe penances for six years, sitting on the banks of Nairanjana, taking only a grain of rice (Taṇḍula Kaṇā), a gain of mustard seed (Tila) and a berry. As a result, his whole body, including his mind, becomes emaciated and incapable of realising the higher truths of life. Here we find just a rudimentary reference of the celebrated "Middle Path" (Majjhimā Paṭipadā) of Buddhism which is neither a Path of absolute asceticism, nor that of absolute physical enjoyment, but tries to steer clear of both these extremes—and work out a golden mean between the two.

Accordingly, the Prince rises from the banks of river Nairanjana, with his body so thin and emaciated as to require the help of the overhanging branches of trees. When he comes out of his seat of meditation, he happens to meet Nandabālā, the daughter of Goparāja, King of the cowherds, who was actually sent there by the gods themselves, to feed him with Paramanna (Pāyaṣa). Soon his six sense organs (including the mind) are fully refreshed and rejuvenated. After that, the Prince again sits under a banyan tree

and starts a most severe penance, this time resolving not to leave it till he attains success.

Naturally, the gods in Heaven and the entire Universe are very happy at his resolution. But, as naturally, Māra, the greatest enemy of “Sad-Dharma” (Religion of Truth) becomes crestfallen. Māra is termed variously as Kāmadeva, Citrāyudha and Puṣpaśara. He has three sons Vibhrama (Error), Haṛṣa (Worldly pleasure) and Darpa (Pride) and three daughters, Rati (Physical enjoyment), Priti (Worldly attachment) and Tṛṣā (Thirst for worldly life).

Accompanied by his children, Māra goes near the Prince and tries his best to tempt him away from the Path of Salvation, but in vain. Then, a divine voice is heard from the skies:

“O, Māra, refrain from your vain efforts, give up your ferocious feelings and be calm. Just as wind cannot move the great mountain Meru, so you, too, cannot shake this person.”

Thus defeated, Māra leaves the place crestfallen.

Left in peace, Buddha engages himself in meditation to discover the causes of universal sufferings and the remedies thereof. Here, *Buddha-Carita* ends abruptly.

### *Saundarānanda Mahākāvya*

The second well-known work of Aśvaghoṣa *Saundarānanda Mahākāvya*, is a beautiful poetic and philosophical treatise of everlasting value, dealing with the conversion of Saundarānanda, the handsome step-brother of Lord Buddha, to Buddhism. It consists of 18 Sargas or cantos.

The Mahākāvya begins with a description as to how the celebrated city of Kapilāvastu has been founded on the site of the hermitage of the departed seer Kapila Gautama, as per his own orders, by certain Princes, sons of Ikṣvāku, who came to dwell there. Then, the eldest Prince becomes the king by common consent.

In course of succession, the kingdom passes to King Śuddhodana. Most of this canto is devoted to describing the unique and excellent qualities of King Śuddhodana. On seeing this, Bodhisattva decides to incarnate himself in the family of that great monarch. Accordingly,

the God-like King Śuddhodana and Goddess-like Queen Māyā Devī see a dream to the effect that a white six-tusked elephant is entering her womb. Then in due course, Siddhārtha or Buddha is born, to the great joy of all. After that, the younger queen gives birth to a son Nanda, equally causing joy to all. Nanda soon grows up to be a very handsome young man, but unfortunately unlike his brother Siddhārtha, he leads a reckless life of self-indulgence devoted wholly to sensuous pleasures. Siddhārtha, on the contrary, seeing an aged man, a sick man and a dead man, leaves the world to seek for the causes and remedies of these worldly sorrows and sufferings.

On attaining Nirvāṇa or Salvation, Buddha visits Kapilāvastu and converts his father Śuddhodana first, and then many pious Śākyas.

But Nanda spends his time in amorous sports with his voluptuous wife Sundarī. At that time, the Lord enters the house for alms, but is ignored by the servants and returns empty-banded. Coming to know of this later on, from a woman who saw the Lord return without obtaining alms, Nanda is very repentant and begs Sundarī's permission to go to him immediately and make amends. Reluctantly, Sundarī permits Nanda to go to the Lord, but enjoins him to return quickly—otherwise she will have nothing further to do with him.

Still under the poisonous influence of his wife, the infatuated Nanda at first refuses to be initiated by Lord Buddha, and wants to return home to his wife. But the Lord admonishes him repeatedly for his own welfare and salvation, and is, at long last, able to initiate him to the Holy Faith.

When Nanda does not return in time, his wife Sundarī wails piteously in despair.

Nanda, though initiated externally by the Lord, is unreformed internally at heart and desires strongly to return to his beautiful amorous wife as early as possible, and starts lamenting loudly for her.

On seeing Nanda's miserable plight, a benevolent disciple of Lord Buddha approaches him and tries to console him by pointing out to him as to how women are often great obstacles to the Path of Salvation. But Nanda is unconvinced, and desires, as before, to give up austerity and return home to his beloved wife. However the well-meaning and kind-hearted disciple still tries to convince him by pointing out that strength is transitory, youth is equally transitory, the body is not identical with the individual, sensuous worldly enjoyments are not real sources of lasting peace and bliss. But the infatuated Nanda is still unconvinced. So, the disciple regretfully informs Lord Buddha of the sorry state of affairs.

On hearing of the very sad plight of his beloved brother and disciple Nanda, the ever-merciful Lord summons Nanda to him and takes him to the beautiful Mount Himavat, full of wild birds and beasts, but chooses an ugly one-eyed she-monkey amongst them and compares it to Sundarī, Nanda's beautiful wife. But Nanda remains unconvinced. So, the Lord takes him to Indra's Paradise, resplendent with lovely, enchanting Apsarās, The weak-minded and sensuously infatuated Nanda is at once assailed with a strong passion for them and strongly desires to have them, forgetting all about his beautiful wife Sundarī. He even goes to the length of asking the Lord's help in this respect. Seizing this opportunity, the benevolent Lord points out to him that these celestial damsels can be had only if Nanda practises strenuous austerities and performs good deeds which alone can lead him to Heaven. So, he should firmly hold his vow and never give it up. Nanda understands and agrees.

Nanda, goaded by his selfish. desires for the Apsarās, starts anew on the Spiritual Path, and tries to stick to practising his great Vow as best as he can. Even his wife fades away from his mind and he has no longer any feeling of love for her.

On seeing this, Ānanda, the greatest disciple of the Lord, takes compassion on him and explains to him clearly as to how the so-called love or passion for women can never bring permanent

happiness to anyone; not even sojourn to Paradise; nor heavenly enjoyment, it is only transitory.

At long last, Nanda's eyes open; baffled and grieved, he runs to the Lord for guidance. The everforgiving Lord explains to him the great merits of the Path and the Law, and praises Nanda for his decision to give up worldly enjoyments and meticulously practise the Supreme Vow of non-attachment, self-control and austerity.

He also takes great pains to instruct Nanda in details as to how he can proceed on the Path to salvation steadfastly. Thus, he points out to Nanda that the ladder to salvation starts from discipline, that leads to a relentless conquest of the senses, which alone cause bondage.

The All-benevolent Lord continues his spiritual discourses for the benefit of his beloved, weak-minded brother Nanda, and points out to him the first step to salvation, viz. complete control of such seemingly most ordinary things of day to day life, like eating, drinking, sleeping and the like. After that, solitary meditation should be practised in right earnest; for, this alone leads to tranquillity.

The ever-helping Lord continues his instructions to Nanda, and points out to him the absolute necessity of emptying the mind of all evil thoughts, evil intentions, evil designs, evil desires, and cravings for worldly life, which are transitory.

After preparing Nanda's mind in this way, for receiving his final great instruction, the ever-discerning Lord explains to him "The Four Noble Truths" (Catvāri Ārya-Satyāni).

Thus instructed by his Enlightened Brother, Nanda enters the Path to Salvation, courageously fighting with passions which enslaved him so long, and comes out victorious. As a result, he gradually gains the first, second and third fruits, viz. True Knowledge, Freedom from Malice, and Approach to the gate of Heaven.

Gradually he reaches the higher and higher stages of the first, second, third and fourth trances.

Grateful and peaceful, Nanda pays a visit to the Lord and informs him about his success and how he has been able to

dissociate himself from all mundane phenomena. Lord Buddha in his turn, eulogises Nanda for his noble efforts and nobler success.

Then, Nanda asks the lord as to how he can show his infinite gratitude to him and is directed by him to help others and show them the Path to Salvation.

### *Sāriputra-Prakaraṇa*

The third great work of Aśvaghōṣa is *Sāriputra-Prakaraṇa*. It gives the life-histories of two of the most celebrated disciples of Lord Buddha—Sāriputra or Sariputta and Maudgalāyana or Maudgalana. Born on the same day in two leading Brahmin families, very close to each other for seven generations they were brought up in great luxury, as befitting rich families. They become very close friends, study together and attain great proficiency in all arts and sciences. Once, the two friends go together to a mountain-top festival and enjoy the same for some time, but soon realise the absolute hollowness of earthly enjoyments. So, they seek spiritual guidance from a wandering hermit Sanjaya, become monks along with 500 other men and begin to practise penance as per his direction. Through strenuous strivings, they are able to reach the goal as prescribed in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga System, viz, realisation of the distinction between Puruṣa (Soul) and Prakṛti (Matter) through ‘Citta-Vṛtti-Nirodha’ (Complete cessation of an mental faculties). But not being fully satisfied with the same, they search for a higher spiritual state of absolute detachment and tranquillity. One day, Sāriputra accidentally meets the elder Aśvajit (Assajit), one of the five disciples of Lord Buddha (Pañca-Vargīya-Bhikṣus), roaming from place to place for alms. Sāriputra is greatly moved by his majestic personality and glorious discourses on Lord Buddha’s enthralling doctrines. So he, along with Maudgalāyana go to meet Buddha. who seeing them coming towards him from a distance, prophesises joyfully that they are destined to become his two chief disciples. Finally, they are converted to Buddhism by Lord Buddha himself.

Aśvaghoṣa is honoured more as a poet than as a philosopher. It is, of course, perfectly correct to hold that his *Buddha Carita* is a poetical composition of a very high order—its every line, rather every word proves the same beyond doubt. Still, it has to be admitted, at the same time, that this unique work is also a philosophical work of an equally high merit. For, through it, the principal doctrines of Buddhism have been brought forth before all in a manner at once sublime and sweet. In fact, the main aim of Aśvaghoṣa was the propagation of Sad-Dharma (Religion of Goodness) and Kalyāṇa-Dharma (Religion of Auspiciousness) regarding which Lord Buddha himself gave an eternally glorious injunction for the benefit of the entire mankind:

Caratha Bhikṣave Cārīkam-Bahu-Jana-hitāya Bahu-jana-sukhāya  
Lokānukampāya Athāya Hitāya Sukhāya Deva-manusyānām.

O, Bhikṣu! Go forth everywhere for the good of many, for the happiness of many, for compassion for the whole world, for the good of gods and men, for their benefit, for their happiness.

And the fundamental maxim which has been immortalised by that entralling, enlivening, and ennobling instruction of Lord Buddha:

Tasmātihānanda: Atta-dīpā Viharatha, Atta-śaraṇā Ananya-śaraṇa.  
Dhamma-dīpā Viharatha: Dhamma-śarṇā, Ananya-śaraṇa

“For this reason, O, Ānanda! move forth as a light unto yourself, as dependent on yourself, and independent of everything else.

“Move forth with Dhamma as your light, as dependent on Dhamma, and independent of everything else.”

The three well-known works of Aśvaghoṣa, viz. *Buddha-Carita*, *Saundarānanda* and *Sāriputra-Prakarāṇa* are all propagators of Buddhism. There can be no doubt that these works are not ends in themselves, for, they were not composed for their own sake, as free spontaneous works of Art or works of Poetry alone, having no ends in view except being highly literary, poetic compositions. But from the very beginning, each of these was used, taken and put forth by the author himself definitely as a means to an end, viz. propagation and popularisation of the sublime Buddha-Dharma, which the author himself accepted, relinquishing his own ancestral religion. But his poetic genius easily and beautifully superseded even his great philosophic power, making his works not merely a handbook or manual of dry Philosophy, but a pure fount of Poesy. In fact, as rarely found, these two apparently opposed traits of a poet and a philosopher have been harmonised in such a wonderful manner here that the softness, and effusiveness of his Poetry never for a moment retard the strictness, firmness and sharpness of his Philosophy. In the same manner, the reality and rationality of his Philosophy never for a moment retard the freshness, liveliness, and loveliness of his Poetry.

That is why, his significant works not only illumine the mind but what is more, enter deeply into our innermost soul inspiring the same in such a unique manner that we do not feel that we are reading Philosophy in Poetry or Poetry in Philosophy—but feel only uplifted and satisfied, which only such a perfect harmony can produce.

### *Philosophy of Buddha-Carita*

In Aśvaghoṣa's main work, *Buddha-Carita*, he has, in a captivating poetic manner, given us as many as fifteen philosophical discourses on Buddhism, mostly very lengthy ones.



*First Philosophical Discourse*  
(Third Canto)

With the kind and loving permission of his father, King Śuddhodana, the Prince, for the first time, comes out of the golden cage of the Royal Palace, where till then he had been living in a celestial world of his own. So, the Prince inevitably faces the hard facts of life for the first time, viz. “Jarā” or old age (3/26-38), “Roga” or disease (3/40-48) and “Maraṇa” or death (3/54-63).

At the very first sight of these fundamental and inevitable facts of life, there is the first dawning of a deep philosophic wisdom in him; and though young, and bred so long in the midst of unmixed pleasures of a fabulous royal life, we find in him the first sign of what has been appropriately called in Philosophy—a “Divine Discontent”—a special kind of most beneficial spiritual discontent.

*Second Philosophical Discourse*  
(Fourth Canto)

The charioteer, in spite of the Prince’s earnest request to the contrary, takes him, under orders of the King, to a pleasure-garden, full of coquettish public women, waiting under orders of the doting affection-blind King, to entice and seduce him (3/63-65). The Prince firmly rejects their amorous advances, for which he is given a long lecture by Udāyi, the clever son of the priest, the sum and substance of which is as follows:

“O, Prince! listen to my friendly advice. As a friend, I have to ask you not to be so indifferent to these lovely women, which would be very harmful to you, young and handsome as you are. Women deserve honour—so, do not spurn them in this unceremonious way.”

Unperturbed and unrelented, the Prince gives a long philosophical discourse, which contains the very first tenet of the Buddhist Religion, viz. non-permanence and sorrowfulness of the world.

The three well-known Buddhist maxims “Sarvam Duḥkham Duḥkharn”, “Sarvam Kṣaṇikam Kṣaṇikam”, “Sarvam Śūnyam

Śūnyam” (“All things are full of sorrow, only sorrow”, “All things are momentary, only momentary”, “All things are void, only void”) are also referred to here.

*Third Philosophical Discourse*  
(Fifth Canto)

On realising the first great truth of Buddhism, viz. Duḥkha (Sorrow), i.e. the world is full of sorrows, because it is non-permanent due to Roga-Jarā-Maraṇa (Disease-Old age-Death), the Prince is unable to find peace. Everything appears to him to be a picture of gloom and despair. Then, getting down from his horse, the Prince sits under a Jambu tree and begins thinking deeply about the origin and destruction of the world with one-pointed attention. Through his deep concentration, his mind, too, becomes steady and free from desires for worldly objects and mortal sufferings, and he attains complete steadiness in his Dhyāna or concentration. This concentration is based on Vitarka and Vicāra (Reasoning and Investigation). After that, he attains a feeling of supreme love (Prīti). That love has sprung forth from his power of discrimination (Viveka). Thus, he attains a state of pleasant one-pointedness or intent concentration (Ekāgratā).

Here, Aśvaghoṣa has mentioned several steps in the above process of Dhyāna and its results:

1. Vitarka-Vicāra – Investigation and reasoning
2. Viveka – Discrimination
3. Prīti – Love
4. Ekāgrata – One-pointed concentration
5. Sukha – Joy
6. Abhimāna-Śūnyata – Freedom from egocity
7. Vairāgya – Indifference

*Fourth Philosophical Discourse*  
(Fifth Canto)

The Prince makes up his mind to embrace Sannyāsa and asks his father’s permission for the same. In reply to his passionate pleadings,

the fond father says, “Oh, my boy, do please give up your plan to become a Sannyāsin, and lead the life of a householder happily. You are a healthy young man and so, for you, there must be first Bhoga and then Tyāga and Yoga (first worldly enjoyment and then service, sacrifice and meditation).

In reply, the Prince poses a most fundamental philosophical question before his grief-stricken and weeping father:

“O, King! if you be my guarantee in the following four matters then alone shall I give up my idea of becoming a recluse.”

“You will have to see to it that death will never assail me at the end of my life, disease will never deprive me of my health, old age will never destroy my youth, disaster will never steal off my properties.

Naturally, the King could give him no such assurance and promise.

Precisely, these are the four questions which make the Prince go out and meditate in peace.

### *Fifth Philosophical Discourse* (Fifth Canto)

When the King comes to know of the firm intention of the Prince to leave the world as a recluse, blinded by filial affection, he again arranges for some courtesans to entice him. The Prince sees them sleeping in indecent postures and thoroughly disgusted, gives forth his fifth philosophical discourse thus:

“Women of this kind are thoroughly impure and ugly looking in the world. But they befool men by being decorated with costly clothes, ornaments, etc. Foolish men are thereby enchanted by these women. But if they know their real, impure, ugly nature, they would not make the same mistake again. But foolish men are enamoured by outside physical beauty alone.” (5/64-66)

In this way, the Prince fully realises the utter futility of being attached to such women and their real sinful nature which makes them deceive men by their vicious coquetry.

*Sixth Philosophical Discourse*

(Sixth Canto)

While bidding farewell to Chandaka before renouncing the world, the Prince gives his sixth philosophical discourse thus—

“Now, what causes all these griefs? Physical enjoyment, enjoyment of worldly objects. Those who are thus attached to worldly objects must of necessity, come to grief.”

“It should not be said that I am renouncing the world at a very young age. For, what is youth when death is knocking at the door?” (6/15-24)

So, here, the Prince is already at the threshold of that great realisation that the root of all worldly sorrows is Avidyā, leading to Sakāma-Karma. Thus, the inexorable series: Avidyā-Bhoga-Karma-Janma-Janmāntara-Duḥkha.

*Seventh Philosophical Discourse*

(Seventh Canto)

But finding Chandaka inconsolable, the Prince gives him, again, another philosophical discourse, bringing forth, of course, no new points, but the very same old and oft-repeated points of the absolute necessity of destruction of Death.

*Eighth Philosophical Discourse*

(Seventh Canto)

Here, we find something very important. For, it is concerned with Tapasyā and Svarga (Heaven)—the fundamental tenets of Dharma of all kinds.

As a matter of fact, when we think of Dharma, we think of these two automatically. But not so the Prince. Though inexperienced and eager to learn the Truth from celebrated hermits of the forest—he at once, with internal vision, spots the fundamental defects in the same from two equally fundamental and important standpoints, viz. its ends and its means.

Thus, the end of Tapasyā is Svarga (Heaven) and not Mokṣa (Salvation). But Svarga, though an enchanting term, stands only for something that is non-eternal. Yes, though it sounds very strange to call even Svarga non-eternal, it is really so. For, Svarga is the result of Puṇya-Karmas or virtuous deeds like Yāga-Yajña etc.; and again, though it may sound very strange, even Puṇya-Karmas are Sakāma-Karmas for, they aim at some kind of selfish fruits or results-like earthly honour and heavenly happiness. But here, a Puṇya-Karma-Kārin goes to Svarga as a result of his Puṇya-Karmas, enjoys heavenly happiness for sometime, and on the exhaustion of his Puṇya-Karmas, returns to the earth again and experiences the appropriate results of his past Sakāma-Karmas, to be experienced in the world. So, he has to begin afresh the very same old series of Birth-Growth-Decay-Death. In Salvation alone, there is no return—as it is not due to Sakāma-Karmas, but Niṣkāma-Karmas and Sādhanās (See below). So, the end is not Svarga but Mokṣa.

Again, what are the means thereto? Very hard, very difficult performance of Yāga-Yajñas etc., involving asceticism of the most difficult type. But as is well known, in Buddhism, a religion, philosophy and ethics of golden means, there is no place for unnecessary hardship, just as there is no place for uncontrolled enjoyment of pleasures and the like. In this way, Buddhism avoids the two ethical extremes of sensualism and asceticism and adopts a beautiful “Middle Path” (Majjhimā Patipadā) according to which “Do not subject yourself, all for nothing, to physical and mental tortures.” Again, “Do not give way to earthly Bhogas or enjoyments in an uncontrolled manner”—but steer a clear, sublime middle course of looking after your body and mind, as necessary for keeping you physically fit which will help you to proceed on the Path to Salvation.”

*Ninth Philosophical Discourse*  
(Seventh Canto)

After staying in the hermitage for some time, the Prince decides to leave it for gaining real knowledge regarding Tapasyā. Hearing this,

the hermits urge the Prince to stay on. On this occasion, the Prince gives his ninth philosophical discourse by way of consoling them and explaining his real reason for leaving the place:

“Your Dharma or all your religious practices and ceremonies, rites and rituals, observances and performances are for attaining “Svarga” or the Heavens, while I have an entirely different end in view, viz. the attainment of Mokṣa. As a matter of fact, your Pravṛtti-Dharma is quite distinct from our Nivṛtti-Dharma.” (7/44-49)

*Tenth Philosophical Discourse*  
(Ninth Canto)

The doting, sorrowing King sends his priest and ministers to the forest to bring the Prince back. Naturally, the Prince refuses, and in this connection, gives his tenth philosophical discourse to them:

“I have heard that Kings living at homes have attained Salvation. But, I say, that cannot be. Mokṣa-Dharma is based on “Śama” or self-control and peace, while “Rāja-Dharma” is based on “Danda” (punishing others) and ferocity. But peace and ferocity cannot go together, just as water and fire cannot. So, I have torn off the net of home and relatives—I do not wish to enter into that bondage again.” (9/30-51)

*Eleventh. Philosophical Discourse*  
(Ninth Canto)

But the indomitable priests and ministers continue their pleadings with him and the Prince replies to them once more patiently by way of giving his eleventh philosophical discourse thus:

“A grave doubt remains in my mind as to whether there is life after death or not. I myself have to know about it by my own self-control and meditation.”

“So, even if the sun falls on the earth, even if the Himalayas become shaky, I shall not return home, full of vain worldly enjoyments, like a foolish man. I shall rather enter into a burning fire than return home unsuccessful.” (7/72-79)

*Twelfth Philosophical Discourse*  
(Eleventh Canto)

While the Prince was staying on the Pāṇḍava hills, Bimbisāra, the King of Magadha, meets him and requests him to enjoy properly the four aims of life or Caturvargas, viz. Dharma-Artha-Kāma-Mokṣa, and perform sacrifices etc. for attaining Svarga or Heaven and finally, offers him half his kingdom.

In reply, the Prince gives his twelfth philosophical discourse (II/2-171-whole of the Canto) thus:

“Being very much afraid of Disease-Old age-Death, I have come here to discover the means of attaining Salvation from the same; and I am convinced that the root causes of these are our selfish, narrow, physical, worldly Kāmanā-Vāsanā (Desires); and for that I have given up attachment to the world, to my sorrowing relatives and friends, and have taken refuge in this Dharma.”

“And Kingship? Is it something so covetable—what after all is the fate of a King? He is like a carrier, only carrying the load of all.

And I? I am for a much higher thing—pierced by the sharp, poisonous arrows of worldly births and deaths, I have come out of the world. How can I go back now?”

*Thirteenth Philosophical Discourse*  
(Twelfth Canto)

Disappointed everywhere so far, the Prince at long last proceeds towards the hermitage of Arāḍha (Arāra), as advised by a Brahmin hermit at the first hermitage where he went after bidding farewell to Chandaka.

Accordingly, the Prince most hopefully proceeds towards his new destination—alas, without knowing that disappointment is awaiting for him there too, and that finally, his Path is his very own, and he will have to traverse the same all alone in accordance with his own world-famous maxim—“Ātmadīpo Bhava” (“Be a light unto thyself”).

However, when he arrives at the hermitage of Arāra, he bows down to the great sage respectfully and tells him touchingly :

“Just as a person who wants to see, is happy to see light; just as a person who wants to proceed somewhere, is happy to get a guide; just as a person who wants to cross a river, is happy to get a boat—so, I am very happy to meet you. Can you please enlighten me as to how we can all be free from Disease, Old age and Death?

The great sage Arāra, too, is equally pleased to see the Prince and gladly undertakes to instruct him regarding his own Philosophy of Life (12/16-80) or the Sāṃkhya-Yoga System of Philosophy, propounded in the Mahābhārata. But it differs a lot from the well-known traditional Sāṃkhya School of thought propounded later on by Iṣvara Kṛṣṇa in his celebrated Sāṃkhya Kārikā and included in the six Āstika Systems or those accepting the Vedas as authoritative. Apart from differences in other aspects and details, the fundamental difference between the two is that here the word Brahman has been mentioned as many as three times.

So, we think, because of the above, the view of the sage Arāra may very well be taken to be a kind of Brahma-vāda, with some portions of Sāṃkhya Darśana interpolated.

However, not being satisfied with the above, Siddhārtha gives here his thirteenth philosophical discourse (12/69-80), propounding the central Buddhist Doctrine of “Anāttavāda” or “Anātmavāda”, the Doctrine that the Soul is not ancient (Sāśvata), eternal (Nitya) and unchanging (Sthira). On the contrary, it is changing every fraction of a second, like a flowing river or a burning lamp.

#### *Fourteenth Philosophical Discourse* (Twelfth Canto)

In this canto Siddhārtha gives his fourteenth philosophical discourse (12/98-104) and propounds another well-known Buddhist doctrine “Majjhimā-Patipadā”: The Middle Path which is neither a path of uncontrolled sensualities nor a path of unreasonable asceticism—but a path of harmonization of the body and the soul, a path of “Healthy mind in a healthy body”. So, strange though it may seem, he says here explicitly that a physically weak and mentally dissatisfied person can never attain Mokṣa. So, the senses have to



be properly satisfied, and through this, the mind, too, is satisfied, and through such a satisfied mind alone can the state of “Samādhi” and “Dhyāna” be possible, leading to Mokṣa.

So, here, Siddhārtha takes “Pāyasa” or rice pudding, from Nandabālā, the daughter of Gopādhipati, after six years of nearfasting.

### *Fifteenth and Last Philosophical Discourse* (Fourteenth Canto)

Then, Prince Siddhārtha sits down for his final Dhyāna or Meditation—and here, as mentioned above, the original *Buddha Carita* ends abruptly. Still, here, he gives his fifteenth and last philosophical discourse (14/10-31), to the effect—“Deluded into doing works which really can bring no good to them, worldly beings try vainly for worldly pleasures, etc.”

The philosophical discourses of *Buddha-carita* definitely and unequivocally bring before all Aśvaghōṣa’s unparalleled poetic powers of presenting dry philosophical tenets in a most beautiful, soothing and attractive manner. Hence, he was unquestionably a poet first and a poet last.

### *Philosophy of Saundarānanda*

Saundarānanda too, like *Buddha-Carita*, is full of philosophical discourses; in fact, this too, as in the case of *Buddha-Carita*, is the only topic of Aśvaghōṣa’s second great work *Saundarānanda*,

But here, too, it in no way nullifies the fact that Aśvaghōṣa was a poet first and a poet last. It is also equally undeniable that Aśvaghōṣa took upon himself a great task, viz. that of expressing the main tenets of Buddhism through his poetry and he was undoubtedly a poet with a Philosophy.

Hence, strange as it may seem, in Aśvaghōṣa’s poetical works there is no description of Nature. Also, not a single word regarding love between the sexes, amorousness, and the like. Also not even of God. All these, specially the first two, ordinarily form the

subject of poets. But here, as pointed out above, the sole subject is Buddhism—elaborate theoretical description of Buddhism, as well as practical.

And herein lie Aśvaghoṣa's originality and great poetic powers. The very prosaic philosophical topics like the Buddhist tenets, have been couched in such a sweet, soft, intelligible, touching, sublime poetical language that it earns him the title of a poet par excellence.

Even a cursory glance at the works of Aśvaghoṣa is enough to convince anyone of the fact that in Aśvaghoṣa, we find a perfect conglomeration of a poet and a philosopher, both of a very higher order. This is as it should be, for, it is an indisputable fact that every poet is a philosopher at heart, and every philosopher a poet. This exhilarating fact has been recognised in India from time immemorial, and that is why, we find in Sanskrit, the familiar term “Kavi”, ordinarily taken to mean a poet, stands always for a poet and a wise man, in the technical sense of the term. As for instance, the meaning of Kavi as given in the world-famous *Amara-Śataka* of the celebrated lexicographer Amara:

Vidvān Vipāścītadosajña San Sudhiḥ Kovida Budhaḥ.  
Dhīro Manīṣī Jñāḥ Prājñāḥ Sāṃkhyāvān Paṇḍitaḥ Kaviḥ.

Here, all the synonyms, like “Vidvān”, “Sudhiḥ”, “Manīṣī”, “Prājñāḥ”, “Paṇḍitaḥ”—to mention only the most well-known ones—stand for a wise man.

In exactly the same manner, according to Nighanṭu, the oldest linguistic literature of India, “Kavi Medhāvī Iti. (3.15) “A Kavi is a wise man”

Therefore, the traditional description of a Kavi fits in most enchantingly in the case of Aśvaghoṣa.

But who is a ‘poet’? A poet is, first and foremost, one who speaks, sings and writes from his heart, his poem being a reflection of his very being. That is why he is able to capture the hearts, souls and minds of others—entering straight into their very lives;

inspiring, uplifting the outside world, the enchanting Nature in his works, as well as the outside world of men, of all living beings—in a word, of the entire world. The entire mankind is very near and dear to him. In short, he is like the large-hearted individual described in the ancient and well known *Hitopadeśa* of Viṣṇu Śarmā:

Ayam Nijo Para Beti Gaṇanā Laghucetaṣām  
 Udārā-Caritāñamca Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam.  
 (Hitopadeśa, Ist Chap. “Mitra-lābha”-Śloka-104)

This is my own, that is not—  
 So count the narrow-minded  
 But to the large-hearted always—  
 The whole world is a relative dearest.

Again, a Poet is over-optimistic or believes fully in the inner goodness of man and the outer benignity of Nature, in spite of apparent instances to the contrary.

“All the powers of the Universe are already ours. Darkness never existed. Weakness never existed. We who are fools, cry that we are impure. As soon as you say—I am a little mortal being, you are saying something that is not true; you are lying to yourself; you are hypnotising yourself into something vile and wretched.” (Swami Vivekananda, II. 293, Mayavati Edition).

Such is a Poet’s strong conviction.

“Power will come, Glory will come, Goodness will come, when the sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.” (Swami Vivekananda, III. 193, Mayavati Edition)

Such is a Poet’s eternal hope.

“You have been taught and told that you can do nothing and non-entities you are becoming every day. What we want is strength. So, believe in yourselves. We have become weak. Make yourselves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men. It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is a man-making education all around that we want.” (Swami Vivekananda, op. cit. 224)

Such is a Poet's robust realisation.

And, a Poet's style? First and foremost, a Poet's style is very simple—yet not feeble—just the contrary.

Again, a Poet's style has a Saundarya-Mādhurya-Aiśvarya: Beauty-Sweetness-Grandeur of its own, unparalleled in the world. For, it is Beauty-Sweetness-Grandeur that spring merrily from a harmony between the Heaven and the earth, the extra-mundane and the mundane, the noumenal and the phenomenal, the ideal and the real, the soul and the body. To a Poet nothing on earth is negligible, or contemptible, for, the supremely beautiful, sweet, and Grand Being is present in all, in every blade of grass, in every grain of dust, in every molecule of atom. Hence, a Poet, manifesting the inner and outer truths of the entire Universe of Souls and Matter must, of necessity, learn to make his medium of doing so, i.e. his language, fit for the same—for “Like alone can know the Like.”

Thirdly, a Poet's style must be poetic, ornate, flowery, yet within limits. On the one hand, who wants to read a dry, dreary, depressing description devoid of sweetness? On the other hand, who wants also an over-ornate, style, much too gushing? Here, too, as everywhere, “the golden mean” is by far the best.

And who can deny that our Poet-Philosopher Aśvaghōṣa is a poet fully in the above sense. His credit lies in the manner he expresses profound, philosophical tenets—elevating all his works—all highly philosophical in nature from the beginning to the end—into real poetic compositions of the highest merit and value.

### *Poetic Excellence of Buddha-Carita*

*Buddha-Carita* is generally regarded as a “Mahākāvya” (A Great Poem).

Viśvanātha, the author of the celebrated *Sāhitya-Darpaṇa*, has enumerated the following as the hallmark of a Mahākāvya:

Sarga-bandho Mahākāvyaṃ Tatraiko Nāyakaḥ Surah  
 Sad-Vaṃśa Kṣatriyo Vāpi Dhīrodātto Guṇānvitah.  
 Eka-Vaṃśa-bhava Bhupaḥ Kulajā Bahave'pi vā.  
 Śṅgāra-Vīra-Sānta-nāmeko'ngi Rasamiṣyate, etc. (6/290)

Or, briefly; a Mahākāvya should consist of several Sargas or sections, at least, more than eight. These sections or chapters must not be too short or too long. They may be composed in the same metre, or in different ones. At the end of each section or chapter, there must be some indication as to the topic of the next. Each section or chapter must be given a different name, as per its topic So much for the outer composition of the chapter.

As regards its internal Rasas, it has been said that in a Mahākāvya, one of the three Rasas should preponderate, viz. Śṅgāra (amorous), Vīra (heroic) or Śānta (tranquil). Of course, there should also be other Rasas also.

As regards the subject, it has been said that it may be historical or the biography of a great person. “Itihāsodbhavad Vṛtyam Anyad...” (*Sāhitya Darpaṇa*-6/290)

It should begin with obeisances, blessings or indications of the topics, and in it, the good should be praised and the bad condemned.

It should contain descriptions of the sun, the moon, mountains, oceans, sages, heavens, seasons, wars, enjoyment, separation, birth of sons, etc. as well as of the Caturvargas, viz. Dharma, Artha, Kāma, Mokṣa. But amongst these, one should be described as the main fruit gained.

It should be named after the hero or other important persons. Its hero should be as follows:

Tyāgi, Kṛṣṭi, Kulīnaḥ Suśriko Rūpa-Yauvanotsāhi  
Dakṣo'nurakta Lostejo Vaidagdhya Śilavān Netā. (3.36)

That is, the hero should be given to renunciation, and must be aristocratic, handsome, young, expert, enthusiastic, popular, experienced, good, and have the qualities of a leader.

According to the *Sāhitya-Darpaṇa*, a hero is of four kinds— Dhīrodātta, Dhīroddhata, Dhīralalita, and Dhīraḥ praśānta. Of these, Dhīrodātta is the best, and according to *Sāhitya-Darpaṇa*, he is:

Avikathanaḥ Kṣamāvānātigambhīra Mahāsattvaḥ  
Stheyauniguḍa Maho Dhīrodātto Dṛdhavrataḥ Kathitaḥ (3/8)

That is, a Dhīrodātta Nāyaka or a hero is averse to pleasures, forgiving, modest and firm in his resolve.

### *Buddha-Carita as a Mahākāvya*

Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddha-Carita* possesses all the characteristics of a Mahākāvya in a prominent manner. It has eight Sargas or sections or chapters, neither too short nor too long. Its topic is the biography of a great sage. Its hero is Dhīrodātta or a Kṣatriya of noble family, possessing the qualities mentioned above. Here, the sections or chapters have been named after their respective topics, and the end of each section indicates the topic of the next. In it, many metres have been used like Vasantatilakā, Indravajrā, Puṣpitāgrā, Upajāti, etc. Also, there are many Rasas or sentiments, even Ādirasas or amorous sentiments (though finally rejected as contemptible) and also descriptions of wars, essential for a Mahākāvya. Thus, in the fourth Sarga, there are sober and controlled descriptions of Ādirasas or amorous sentiments, where in accordance with the wishes of King Śuddhodana himself, beautiful, voluptuous ladies try to entice the Prince by their amorous devices. Again, in the thirteenth Sarga, there is a vivid description of the war between Prince Siddhārtha and Māra (the evil one). It is, of course, not an ordinary war of malice, hatred, killing, death, distress, etc., but a spiritual, moral war between the soul and the body, virtue and vice, morality and immorality, truth and untruth, religion and irreligion, love and hate, etc. with the final triumph of Truth, Religion, Justice, Love, Goodness, or in one word—triumph of the Soul.

Although it contains many Rasas or sentiments, the main one is Śānta Rasa or the tranquil sentiment.

So, this Mahākāvya is full of numerous kinds of beautiful descriptions, as befitting a real, full-fledged Mahākāvya of the highest order. Not only that, it is an absolutely novel one, considering the fact that Mahākāvyas are mainly concerned with heroes and heroines only and their love affairs, love-quarrels, amorous behaviour, union and separation and similar very mundane topics. But such a Mahākāvya, concerned with the exhilarating, exalting, uplifting

biography of a religious preceptor and his spiritual teachings is rare in Sanskrit Literature. In this respect, it may be compared only with *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja.

*Buddha-Carita* is really a mine of information in many respects, and it gloriously proves the great scholarship and deep knowledge of the author Aśvaghoṣa in many subjects and spheres, such as the Vedas, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, Purāṇas, Tarkaśāstra (Logic), Sāṃkhya System, Kāma-Śāstra, Vyākaraṇa (Grammar), Chanda, Alaṃkāra (Rhetorics and Prosody), etc.

Aśvaghoṣa's writings are also resplendent with the qualities of Prasāda or clearness, Samāra or equipoise, Mādhurya or sweetness, Sukumāratā or softness, etc.

### *A Poet-Philosopher*

All these, according to some, make Aśvaghoṣa a great poet, greater than a philosopher, specially because his writings lack very profound, subtle, difficult, arguments and counter-arguments against opponents, so common in all treatises of Buddhism. But such argumentation and refutation of rival views do not constitute the very essence or nature or soul of a Philosopher worth the name.

Agādha-Jala-Sañcāri Vikāri Na Tu Rohitaḥ  
Gaṇḍuṣa-rnātreṇa Jalena Safari Pharpharāyate.

“A big fish, sweeping in deep water, is calm and makes no sound.  
But a small fish, swimming in a handful of shallow water, seems  
to be very much perturbed and makes a lot of noise, splashing  
water all around.”

In the same way, a true philosopher, when he is able to reach the highest level of deepest knowledge—needs no arguments to prove his theory or counter-arguments to disprove his opponent's theories.

Such is the case with Aśvaghoṣa too, and our poet-philosopher Aśvaghoṣa, tranquil, peaceful, blissful in his fullest and clearest realisation of the highest Truth of Buddhism, only expresses the same in his very own most poetic and sweet style.



### Aśvaghōṣa's Own Opinion

But what is Aśvaghōṣa's own opinion in the matter?

In this connection, the last two Ślokaś of his *Saundarānanda Kāvya* (13/63-64) may be taken into account. These run as follows :

Ityesā Vyupaśāntaye Na Rataye Mokṣārthagarbhā Kṛti  
Pāṃsubhyo Dhātujebhyo Niyatamupakaraṃ Cāmicaramiti  
(13/63-64)

“This poem dealing with the subject of Salvation, has been written in the Kāvya style, not for bringing about pleasure, but only for furthering the attainment of tranquillity and reformation of persons devoted to other things. For that, I have dealt with other subjects besides Salvation here, in accordance with the rules of Kāvya-Poetry, in order to make the work palatable, just as sugar is put into bitter medicine to make it drinkable.” (13/63)

“Since I saw mankind attached to sense-pleasures and averse to Salvation, I have here expressed the Final Truth under the guise of a Kāvya, considering Salvation to be the supreme goal of life. Let the readers understand this fully and study attentively in it that which leads to tranquillity, and not that which is merely pleasurable, as only the residue of gold is taken, after it is separated from the metal dust.” (13/64).

“This poem is written by the great eloquent poet, the mendicant and teacher, the revered Aśvaghōṣa, the noble son of Suvarṇākṣi of Sāketa.” (Colophon)

Here, the *Saundarānanda Kāvya* ends.

Thus, though Aśvaghōṣa claims himself to be more a philosopher, a benefactor of mankind, showing all the Path to Salvation, than a poet causing pleasure to some, his eternal and widespread fame rests, as pointed out above, on his poetic excellence, rather than on his philosophical wisdom.

## 5 Select Verses from Buddha-Carita and Saundarānanda Mahākāvya

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### I Buddha-Carita

*Birth of Lord Buddha* (Canto I, Verses 21-22)

Yasya Prasūtau Girirajakīla  
Vātāhatā Nauriva Bhūścacāla.  
Sacandanā Cōtpalapadmagarbhā  
Papāta Vṛṣṭirgaganādanabhrāt. (I/21)

When Gautama Buddha was born, the earth, though fastened to the Himalayas, the king of mountains, trembled with joy and excitement like a ship driven by the wind; and from the cloudy sky, a shower fell, scented with sandalwood, and resplendent with blue and pink lotuses. (1/21)

Vātā Vavuh Sparśasukhā Manojñā  
Divyāni Vāsāmsayavapātayantaḥ  
Sūryaḥ Sa Evābhyadhikam Cakāśe  
Jajvāla Saumyārciranauritogñiḥ (I/22)

Lovely winds, soft to touch, blew, showering down heavenly dresses. The sun shone most brightly and fire, though unstirred, blazed with beautiful flames. (1/22)

*Gautama Buddha to his beloved and trusted horse Kaṅṭhaka*  
(Canto V, Verses 78-79)

Tadidaṁ Parigamya Dharmayuktam  
Mama Niryaṇamito Jagaddhitāya.  
Turgottama Vegavikramābhyām  
Prayatasvātmahite Jagaddhite Ca. (V/78)

Understand, therefore, O, best of steeds, my departure from here is for the sake of Dharma, for the benefit of the world; and strive with speed and courage for a matter which is for your own good, as well as for the good of the world. (V /78)

Iti Suhṛīdamivānuśiṣya Kṛtye  
Turogavaram Nṛvaro Vanam Yiyasuḥ.  
Sitamasitagatidyutirvapuṣmān  
Raviriva Śāradamabhramāruha. (V /79)

In this way, the greatest man, very beautiful and shining like fire, instructed his white horse, the best of the steeds, to do his duty like a friend; and mounted on him to go the forest, just like the sun, blazing like fire, mounting on a white autumnal cloud. (V /79)

*When Gautama Buddha entered the penance grove*  
(Canto VII Verses 5-6)

Hṛṣṭāśca Kekā ṁumucurmayurā  
Dṛṣṭyāmbudam Nilamivonnamantaḥ.  
Śaṣpāṇi Hitvābhimukhāśca  
Tasthurṁṛgāscatākṣa Mṛgacāriṇaśca. (VII/5)

Delighted peacocks cried out, as if seeing a black rain-cloud; and deer with restless eyes, as well as ascetics grazing like deer, let their grasses fall, and stood facing him. (VII/5)

Dṛṣṭvā Tamikṣvākukulapradīpam  
Jvalantamudyantamivāṁśumantam.  
Kṛte'pi Dohe Janitarapromodāḥ  
Prasusuvurhomaduśca Gāvaḥ (VII/6)

And although the cows that gave milk for oblations, had already been milked, yet, they were so overjoyed at his sight—the lamp of the Ikṣvāku race and shining like the rising sun—that milk flowed once again from their udders. (VII/6)

*Gautama Buddha on Mount Pāṇḍava*  
(Canto X, Verses 14-15)

Adāya Bhaiṣaṃ Ca Yathopapannam  
Yayau Gireḥ Prasravaṃ Viviktam.  
Nyāyena Tatrabhyavahr̥tya Cainanmahidharaṃ  
Pāṇḍavamāruroha. (X/14)

Accepting alms without distinction, he went towards a lonely rivulet of the mountain and after taking his meal there, in due form, he climbed Mount Pāṇḍava, (X/14)

Tasminnavau Lodhravanopagūḍhe  
Mayūranādapratipūrṇa Kuñje.  
Kāṣāyavāsāḥ Sa Babhau Nṛsūryo  
Yathodayasyopari Bālasūryaḥ. (X/15)

On that mountain decorated with groves of Lodhra trees and resounding with peacock calls, he, the sun of mankind, went in his ochre-coloured robes, like the sun above the eastern mountains in early morning. (X/15)

*Gautama Buddha to Magadha King*  
(Canto XI, Verses 34-35)

Kāmārthamajña Kṛpaṇaṃ Karoti  
Prāpnoti Duḥkham Vadhavandhanādi.  
Kāmārthamāśā-Kṛpaṇastapasvī  
Mṛtyuṃ Śramaṃ Cārchatī Jivalokaḥ. (XI/34)

For the sake of passion, ignorant men behave badly and foolishly, and become subject to the sufferings due to death, bonds,

etc. For the sake of passion, the wretched, tormented world has to face toils and death. (X/34)

Gītairhiyante Hi Mṛgā Vadhāya  
 Rupārthā magnau Śalabhāḥ Patanti.  
 Matsyo Giratyāyasamamiṣārthī  
 Tasmādanārthaṃ Viṣayāḥ Phalanti. (XI/35)

For deers are lured to their destruction by songs; moths fly in to the fire for its brightness; the fish greedy for the bait swallows the hook. Hence, sense-objects bring disasters always. (XI/35)

## II

### Saundarānanda

*Gautama Buddha's meditation under a Pipul Tree*  
 (Canto III, Verses 6-7)

Sa Subarṇapīnayugabāhu-  
 Ṛṣabhaḡatīrāyatekṣaṇa.  
 Plakṣama vaniruhamaḡbyaḡmatparamasya  
 Nīścayavidherbubhutsayā. (III/6)

With his eyes wide-stretched, walking like a bull, stout with his golden arms as long as a yoke, he (Gautama Buddha) sat under a Pipul tree in his desire to grasp the Supreme Method of reaching the Truth. (III/6)

Upaviśya Tatrakṛtabuddhir  
 Acaladhṛtiradhrirājāvat.  
 Mārabalajayadugramatho  
 Bubudhe Padam Śīvamahārvyamayayam. (III/7)

Seated there in a determined manner, as immovable and steady as the Himalayas, the king of mountains, he conquered hosts of Māra. Then, he came to understand the Holy Truth which is eternal and can never be lost. (III/7)

*Sorrowing State of Nanda's wife Sundarī*  
(Canto VI, Verses 25-26)

Sā Rodanaroṣitaraktadr̥ṣṭiḥ  
 Samtapasam̐kṣobhitagātrayaṣṭiḥ.  
 Papāta Śīrṇakulahārayaṣṭhi  
 Phalānibhārādiva Cūtayaṣṭhi. (VI/25)

With her eyes reddened with crying, and her slender body shaken with anguish, she fell down, breaking and scattering her rope of pearls, like a mango tree branch, breaking down under the excessive weight of its fruits. (VI/25)

Sā Padmarāgaṃ Vasaṇaṃ Vasānā  
 Padmānanā Padmadatayatākṣmi.  
 Padmā Vipadmā Patiteva Lakṣmīḥ  
 Śuśoca Padmasragivātapena. (VI/26)

Wearing lotus-coloured clothes, with her lotus face and eyes like a lotus-petal, lotus-coloured like a fallen (statue of) Lakṣmi without her lotus, she withered like a lotus garland in the sun. (VI/26)

*Mendicant-Disciple's Instruction to Nanda*  
(Canto IX, Verses 47-48)

Ihaiva Bhūtvā Ripavo Badhātmakāḥ  
 Prayānti Kale Puruṣasya Mitratām.  
 Paratra Caiveha Ca Duḥkhahetavo Bhavanti  
 Kāmā Na Tu Kasyacchivāḥ. (IX/47)

Murderous enemies may deceitfully seek friendship with a man. In the same manner, passions are causes of sufferings only here and hereafter; and never bring any advantage at all to any one. (XI/47)

Yathopayuktaṃ Rasavarṇagandhavadvā dhāya  
 Kirṇpākaphalam Na Puṣṭaye.

Niṣevyamāṇā Viṣayāścatatmano  
Bhavantya narthāya thathā Na Bhūtyaye. (IX/48)

Just as eating of a “Kimpāka fruit” leads to death, and never to rejuvenation, though its taste, colour and fragrance are excellent—so, sense-gratification leads a man of unbalanced mind to disaster, never to well-being. (IX/48)

*Description of Svarga or Paradise*  
(Canto X, Verses 24-25)

Vaiḍūryanātani Ca Kāñcanāni  
Padmāni Vajrañkurakesarāṇi.  
Sparśakṣamamaṇyuttamagandhāvanti  
Rohanti Niṣkampalā Nalinyāḥ. (X/24)

Lotus ponds, with calm and quiet surface, can produce golden lotuses with stems of beryl and shoots of diamond; soft and delightful to touch, and fragrant to smell. (X/24)

Yatrāyataṃscaiva Tantāmsca  
Taṃstanvādyasya Hetunusuṣirān Dhanāmsca.  
Phalanti Vṛkṣā Maṇihemacitrāḥ  
Kṛidāsahayāstridaśālayānāṃ. (X/25)

There are trees, gorgeous with gold and gems, assisting gods in their pastimes by bearing all kinds of fruits, viz. musical instruments of skin and string, hollow and solid. (X/25)

*Glory of Yoga*  
(Canto XVII, Verses 11-12)

Puraṃ Vidhāyānuvidhāya Daṇḍaṃ  
Mitrāṇi Saṃgr̥hya Ripūn Viḡr̥hya.  
Rājā Yathāpnoti Hi Gāmapūrvaṃ  
Nīrirmumuḡṣorapi Saiva Yoge. (XVIII/11)

Just as a king gains sovereignty over new lands by building strong cities, administering justice, making allies and repressing enemies; so, exactly does Yoga for a man who aspires after Salvation. (XVII/11)

Vimokṣakāmasya Hi Yoginopi  
 Manaḥ Puram Jñānāvidhiśca Daṇḍaḥ.  
 Guṇāśca Mitrāṇyāśca Doṣā  
 Bhūmirvīmuktiryatate Yadarthe. (XVII/12)

For the mind of a Salvation-seeking Yogin is his strong city; his way of knowledge, his administration of justice; his virtues, his allies; his vices, his enemies; and Salvation, the land for which he strives. (XVII/12)

### *Nanda to Lord Buddha*

(Canto XVIII, Verses 11-12)

Matrīstaniṃ Vyañjana Vārusāsnaṃ  
 Saddharmadugdham Pratibhānaṣṅgā.  
 Tavāsmi Gāṃ Sādhu Nipīya  
 Trptastṛṣeva Gāmuttamavatsavarṇaḥ. (XVIII/11)

Most Excellent One! I have drunk like a calf from the cow of Thy speech—with nipples of benevolence, beautiful dewlap of clear expression, milk of good law or the Noble Truths, and horns of imagination. And all my desires have been fulfilled, just as a calf's thirst is quenched. (XVIII/11)

Yatpaśyataścādhiḡomo Mamāyam  
 Tanme Samāsenā Mune Nibodha.  
 Savajña Kāmam Veditam Tavaitatsvam  
 Tūpacāram Prabibakṣurasmi. (XVIII/12)

O Sage! hear from me what I did to reach this Supreme State of Salvation. For, you are omniscient, and so already know this. Yet, I wish to tell you about my experience. (XVIII/12)



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