

Karma and Karmavipāka in Early Buddhist Avadāna Literature*

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It has frequently been noted that a major characteristic of Buddhist avadāna literature¹ is its narration of religiously significant deeds and their subsequent effects.² However, the details of these narratives have not received much scholarly attention. Rather than describing a simple ‘karmically black-and-white world’,³ as is sometimes understood, avadānas depict a complex system of karma involving several interactive factors. In order to illustrate this, three early Indian avadāna/apadāna collections will be considered: the Pāli *Apadāna*, and the Sanskrit *Avadānaśataka* and *Divyāvadāna*.⁴ Because these collections are in

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1. In this article, the terms ‘avadāna literature’, ‘avadāna collections’, ‘the avadānas’, etc. are used in a broad sense to include Pāli apadānas.

2. e.g. W. G. Weeraratne, ‘Avadāna’, in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, ed. G. P. Malalasekera (Colombo: Government of Ceylon, 1966), 2: 396.

3. Jonathan S. Walters, ‘*Stūpa*, Story, and Empire: Constructions of the Buddha Biography in Early Post-Aśokan India’, in *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Juliane Schober (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1997), 173. This comment was made in relation to the *Apadāna*. Similarly, Strong states that ‘the complexity of the system is much simplified’ in avadāna literature compared to the ‘actual theory of karma’. John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Princeton University Press, 1983), 57.

4. In this paper, Pāli terms will generally be used when referring to the *Apadāna* or other Pāli texts, whereas Sanskrit terms will be used elsewhere.

different languages, are associated with different Buddhist schools⁵ and were composed over different time periods,⁶ they are by no means homogenous in content. However, there are striking similarities in the ways in which they narrate cause and effect, permitting some general observations to be made about early Indian avadāna literature.

Beginning at the most basic level, it is clear that a major function of avadāna literature is to convince the intended audiences that action (*karma*) ripens to produce a fruit of action (*karmavipāka*). This is facilitated by the often close resemblance of a deed and its fruit. For example, in a story from the *Avadānaśataka* a householder anoints the stūpa of Vipāśyin Buddha with various perfumes and pays homage with incense and flowers.⁷ The fruit which ripens from this karma is a rebirth in which ‘the scent of blue lotus breezes from his mouth [and] the scent of sandalwood from his body’ (*asya mukhān nīlotpalagandho vāti śarīrāc candanagandhas*).⁸ In the *Apadāna*, a man makes a lion throne and a footstall for Siddhattha Buddha.⁹ He is then reborn in a huge celestial mansion in Tusita (Skt. Tuṣita) heaven. The fruit of making the lion throne is an array of ornate couches in the mansion and the fruit of making the footstall is a collection of shoes made from precious materials.

5. The *Apadāna* belongs to the Theravādins, while both the *Avadānaśataka* and the *Divyāvadāna* have been associated with the Sarvāstivādin school by some scholars and the Mūlasarvāstivādin school by other scholars.

6. There is a tenuous consensus that the *Apadāna* was composed sometime during the last two centuries BCE, the *Avadānaśataka* during the first two centuries CE and the *Divyāvadāna* between 200 and 350 CE; however, these dates are far from settled and require further research. Sally Mellick Cutler, ‘The Pāli Apadāna Collection’, *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 20 (1994): 32; Alice Collett, ‘Somā the Learned Brahmin’, *Religions of South Asia* 3 (2009): 94; Andy Rotman, *Divine Stories: Divyāvadāna*, part 1 (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008), 6, 385–6 n14.

7. J. S. Speyer, ed., *Avadānaśataka: A Century of Edifying Tales Belonging to the Hīnayāna*, 2 vols (St Petersburg: Académie impériale des sciences, 1902–1909), I: 352–3 (hereafter cited as *Avś*).

8. *Avś* I: 350.11–12. In this article, numbers following page citations refer to line number. All translations are my own.

9. Mary E. Lilley, ed., *The Apadāna* ([1925–1927] Lancaster: Pali Text Society, 2006), 55 (hereafter cited as *Ap*). While the Pali Text Society edition of this text is quoted for ease of reference, I have consulted the major editions in Sinhala, Burmese and Thai scripts, which are more reliable.

A deed is not only echoed in its karmic result but, as noted by Strong,¹⁰ not infrequently also in the very name of its performer. For example, in the aforementioned stories the names of the protagonists are Sugandhi (Sweet-Scented) and Sīhāsanadāyaka (Donor of a Lion Throne) respectively.

It may strike the reader as strange that, in the case of Sīhāsanadāyaka, performing some basic carpentry could lead to such magnificent results. Indeed, avadāna composers appear to have been concerned that the intended audiences might have difficulty accepting some of the narrative. We find passages in which people express a sense of disbelief¹¹ or surprise¹² about the fruit of karma and, in the case of the *Divyāvadāna*, successful attempts are made to change their minds. However, passages from avadāna literature in which a seemingly trivial deed will later produce a seemingly disproportionately large karmic fruit are so common that they are a key feature of this genre of literature. The following examples show that, in the case of giving (*dāna*), the market value of a gift does not have a major influence upon the eventual karmic fruit.¹³ In the *Apadāna* it is narrated that a man makes a flag by tying some of his clothing to a bamboo stick and then offers this to the stūpa of Padumuttara Buddha.¹⁴ It is predicted that, as a result, he will be reborn as a wheel-turning monarch one thousand times and as a god for thirty thousand aeons. In the *Divyāvadāna*, a leper gives some rice water to a monk.¹⁵ In the process a fly falls in and, when she begins to remove it, one of her fingers falls off into the rice water. As a result of this seemingly poor offering, the woman is reborn in Tuṣita heaven. What, then, are the reasons for such astonishing results?

10. John Strong, 'The Transforming Gift: An Analysis of Devotional Acts of Offering in Buddhist *Avadāna* Literature', *History of Religions* 18 (1979): 230.

11. E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil, eds., *The Divyāvadāna: A Collection of Early Buddhist Legends Now First Edited from the Nepalese Sanskrit Mss. in Cambridge and Paris* (Cambridge University Press, 1886), 7–17, 70–1 (hereafter cited as *Divy*).

12. *Ap* 343.9–10; *Avś* I: 329.10.

13. However, it is not entirely negligible; see *Divy* 78–9.

14. *Ap* 73.

15. *Divy* 82–3.

The Recipient: A Field of Merit

The most well known factor involved in this process is the field of merit (*puṇyakṣetra*), which concerns the recipient of a deed more than its performer. A good field of merit is a person or object with a high spiritual quality that amplifies the karmic fruit generated from a deed directed towards it. As in the Pāli Canon,¹⁶ an agrarian analogy is used in a passage in the *Divyāvadāna* to explain this concept.¹⁷ It states that even a small seed can grow into a large tree if the field it is sowed in has good soil. In the same way, a seemingly insignificant deed can result in a large karmic fruit if directed towards a good field of merit. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of this concept in avadāna literature. It is not only assumed knowledge providing meaning to much of the narrative but is explicitly discussed in all three of these collections. For example, in a striking passage in the *Apadāna* the dialogue suddenly turns to the second-person to directly address the composition's intended audience(s), plainly stating, 'you should perform a meritorious deed to an unsurpassed field of merit' (*puññakkhette anuttare adhikāraṃ kareyyātha*).¹⁸

Exactly who or what is a good field of merit? A passage in the Pāli Canon ranks individuals in terms of what one can expect to gain in return, via the ripening of karma, after giving a gift to them.¹⁹ At the bottom of the list is an animal. The text states that the return to be expected from giving to an animal is one hundredfold. A slightly better recipient is an unvirtuous ordinary person. The return to be expected from giving a gift to such a being is one thousand-fold. Towards the top of the list are three types of awakened beings: to use the Pāli terms, the third best individual recipient is an arahat, the second best is a paccekabuddha and the best is a buddha. The return to be expected from giving to any of these three beings is incalculable. Similarly, in the *Suttanipāta* of the Pāli Canon it is explained that 'The Buddha ... is an unsurpassed field of merit ... [A gift] given to the venerable one has great fruit' (*buddho ... puññakkhetam*

16. eg. *Ap* 250.15–17; M. Léon Feer, ed., *The Saṃyutta-nikāya of the Sutta-piṭaka* (Oxford University Press for the Pali Text Society, 1884), 1: 21.14–17.

17. *Divy* 70–1.

18. *Ap* 75.27–8.

19. Robert Chalmers, ed., *Majjhima-nikāya* ([1899] London: Messrs. Luzac and Company for the Pali Text Society, 1960), 3: 255.

anuttaram ... *bhoto dinnaṃ mahapphalan*).²⁰ In the *Divyāvadāna* a buddha is even called ‘a field of merit with two feet’ (*dvipādakaṃ puṇyakṣetram*).²¹ It seems that this general idea is embraced throughout *avadāna* literature, in which arhats, pratyekabuddhas and buddhas are indeed very common recipients of meritorious deeds which eventually yield great fruit. The *Apadāna* in particular has a past buddha as a deed’s recipient in a great number of its stories.

In the *avadāna* collections considered here, excellent fields of merit are not restricted to certain living beings, but also appear to include certain objects. Of particular importance are the bodily relics of a buddha.²² The *Divyāvadāna* explicitly states that the merit generated from paying homage to a buddha who has passed into *parinirvāṇa* is no different from the merit generated from paying homage to a living buddha.²³ Apparently not all Buddhist schools agreed with this idea and it is possible that this statement is a reflection of a doctrinal position held by the *Mūlasarvāstivādins*,²⁴ the school most often associated with the *Divyāvadāna*.²⁵ In the *avadānas* considered here, paying homage to *stūpas* containing the relics of a buddha is a common deed said to produce great karmic fruit. Two examples of this have already been described: the story from the *Avadānaśataka* in which a householder anoints the *stūpa* of

20. Dines Andersen and Helmer Smith, eds, *Sutta-nipāta* ([1913] Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1997), 86.1–3.

21. *Dīvy* 48.6–7, 63.24.

22. In the Mahāyāna *Suvarṇaprabhāsaśūtra*, bodily relics are called a field of merit. S. Bagchi, ed., *Suvarṇaprabhāsaśūtra*, 2nd edn (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 2002), 107.5. While relics appear to be treated as a field of merit in *avadāna* literature, I am not aware of any *avadāna* passage explicitly labelling them as such.

23. *Dīvy* 79.19–20. A parallel passage is found in the *Vimānavatthu*, a Pāli text related to the *avadāna* genre. N. A. Jayawickrama, ed., *Vimānavatthu and Petavatthu* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1999), 69.9. These passages are consistent with early Indian inscriptions which indicate that their composers regarded relics as living entities. Gregory Schopen, ‘Burial “*ad sanctos*” and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism: A Study in the Archeology of Religions’, *Religion* 17 (1987): 204–5.

24. Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka Era*, trans. Sara Webb-Boin (Paris: Peeters Press, 1988), 634.

25. e.g. Satoshi Hiraoka, ‘The Relation Between the *Divyāvadāna* and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*,’ *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 26 (1998), 419–34.

Vipaśyin Buddha with perfumes and the story from the *Apadāna* in which a man offers a flag to a stūpa containing the relics of Padumuttara Buddha. In addition, the *Divyāvadāna* lists a number of highly meritorious deeds to be performed at the shrines of a buddha, including walking around them, placing a lump of clay or loose flowers²⁶ at them and making a gift of a lamp at them.²⁷

A number of other objects appear to be regarded as excellent fields of merit in the *Apadāna*. Stories describe watering a bodhi tree during a bodhi tree festival²⁸ and building a railing for a bodhi tree²⁹ as very meritorious deeds. In one story, a man removes the old sand at the site of the bodhi tree of Vipassin Buddha, replaces it with clean sand and is subsequently reborn a wheel-turning monarch.³⁰ Elsewhere there are passages in which homage is paid to the footprints of past buddhas³¹ and, interestingly, to the wheel (imprint) within a footprint.³² Again, such acts are narrated as eventually bearing great karmic fruit. These objects appear to have been thought of as excellent fields of merit because of their close connection with a buddha. Indeed, although apparently not specifically labelled as such in the *Apadāna*, it is conceivable that the composers of this text considered each of these objects as a relic; not a bodily relic (*sarīradhātu*), but rather a relic of use (*paribhogadhātu*).³³

26. This seems preferable to the translation ‘pearls and flowers’ by Rotman, *Divine Stories*, 156.

27. *Divy* 78–9.

28. *Ap* 105.21–2, 131.12–14.

29. *Ap* 400.24–5.

30. *Ap* 79.2–7.

31. *Ap* 383.11–16, 434.23–8. Claudio Cicuzza, *A Mirror Reflecting the Entire World. The Pāli Buddhapādamaṅgala or ‘Auspicious Signs on the Buddha’s Feet’*. *Critical Edition with English Translation* (Bangkok: Fragile Palm Leaves Foundation and Lumbini International Research Institute, 2011), xxix–xxx.

32. *Ap* 283.10–13.

33. Bodhi trees and footprints of the Buddha are discussed as relics of use in Richard F. Gombrich, *Buddhist Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon* ([1971] London: Kegan Paul International, 1995), 127–8; and John S. Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton University Press, 2004).

The Performer: Faith and Fervent Aspiration

The qualities of the performer of a deed are just as important as the qualities of its recipient. A passage in the Pāli Canon lists five conditions which enhance the karmic fruit of giving: giving with faith, with respect, at the right time, with a generous mind³⁴ and without harming oneself or others.³⁵ However, in avadāna literature, faith (*prasāda*)³⁶ is singled out as being the most important quality one can have while giving or, in fact, performing any kind of meritorious deed. In a high proportion of avadānas it is specifically mentioned that the performer of a deed which eventually produces great fruit has faith in his or her mind at the very moment the deed is performed. For example, in the story of the leper from the *Divyāvadāna*, immediately before giving rice water to the monk, she cultivates faith in her mind.³⁷ In avadāna literature this faith is sometimes directed towards a buddha,³⁸ or towards a feature of a buddha such as his halo,³⁹ his voice,⁴⁰ or his footprint,⁴¹ or towards the monastic order (*saṅgha*).⁴² Often it is not specifically mentioned to whom or what the faith is directed; however, the context frequently implies it is to the recipient of the meritorious deed.

While the importance of faith is strongly inferred by its frequent appearance in avadānas, it is confirmed by passages which clearly state its causal role. In a number of stories in the *Apadāna*, it is declared that the fruit of generating faith is the avoidance of rebirth in a bad realm.⁴³ In addition, numerous stories state that because of having faith in the mind,

34. Here I follow the Buddha Jayanti reading in Sinhala script (*anaggahitacitto*).

35. E. Hardy, ed., *Āṅguttara-nikāya* ([1897] Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1994), 3: 172–3.

36. The difficulty of translating this word into a single English term has been noted many times before since it may also mean ‘purity’, ‘tranquility’, ‘joy’, etc. For these avadāna texts, the translation ‘faith’ seems most apt.

37. *Divy* 82.20.

38. *Ap* 75.30, 78.9, 254.26.

39. *Ap* 129.17, 210.10.

40. *Ap* 256.7, 282.7.

41. *Ap* 119.16, 383.14, 434.26.

42. *Ap* 250.23.

43. *Ap* 250.25, 282.9.

rebirth in a good realm is achieved.⁴⁴ In the *Divyāvadāna* the Buddha states ‘faith in the mind towards tathāgatas [buddhas] has inconceivable results’ (*tathāgatānāṃ cittaprasādo ’py acintyavipākāḥ*).⁴⁵ It is notable that the *Vimānavatthu*, a Pāli text related to the avadāna genre, persistently gives faith a prominent role in its narratives.

What role does faith play in avadāna narrative? In investigating this question in the context of the *Divyāvadāna*, Rotman considers faith a powerful outside force that is able to ‘allow one to escape from one’s karmic destiny’.⁴⁶ Rather than being cultivated by conscious intention, he argues that faith arises seemingly automatically upon the sighting of a field of merit, often called an ‘agent of faith’ (*prāsādika*),⁴⁷ which in turn causes a seemingly automatic compulsion to give. Exceptions to this pattern described by Rotman appear to be rare; however, they do exist. For example, in one story describing a monk prostrating himself before a stūpa, there is no indication that faith is controlled by an automatic process; instead, the monk actively ‘cultivates faith in his mind’ (*cittam abhiprasādayati*).⁴⁸ Such descriptions are more frequent in the *Apadāna*. For example, there are many instances of phases with causative first-person singular verbs expressing ‘I cultivated faith in my mind’ (e.g. *cittaṃ pasādayiṃ*), often immediately preceding the performance of a meritorious deed.⁴⁹ Additionally, some meritorious deeds are performed after the protagonist carefully reasons that to do so will be for his or her own future benefit.⁵⁰ In the *Apadāna*, faith is less an outside force that engenders a meritorious deed and more a part of the deed itself. Indeed, in

44. e.g. *Ap* 55.8, 56.16, 59.21. These passages may alternatively be translated, ‘with that faith in my mind I was reborn ...’, in which case a causal role still seems to be implied.

45. *Divy* 142.9–10. Here I follow the reading found in P. L. Vaidya, ed., *Divyāvadāna* (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1959), 88.23.

46. Andy Rotman, ‘The Erotics of Practice: Objects and Agency in Buddhist *Avadāna* Literature,’ *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71 (2003): 564.

47. In most circumstances this term simply means ‘pleasant’ or ‘attractive’, but in this context Rotman’s translation ‘agent of faith’ seems justified. Rotman, *Divine Stories*, 5.

48. *Divy* 196.25.

49. e.g. *Ap* 69.7, 379.29, 383.14.

50. *Ap* 74.11–20, 379.25–30; *Avś* I: 158.8–10.

a number of stories the generation of faith is considered a meritorious deed in and of itself, capable of producing great fruit.⁵¹

In the Buddhist context, karma is of course not simply action, it is intentional action⁵² and it is worthwhile noting that there are numerous deeds described in *avadānas* that are primarily mental rather than physical. For example, in the *Divyāvadāna* two parrots take the three refuges and the Buddha predicts that as a result they will be reborn many times in many heavenly realms and will eventually attain awakening.⁵³ In the *Apadāna*, a number of mental deeds are described, including the recollection of the Buddha,⁵⁴ taking the three refuges⁵⁵ and taking the five precepts.⁵⁶ These are described as fully fledged meritorious deeds having very favourable results.

Perhaps just as powerful as faith in influencing karmic fruit is fervent aspiration (*praṇidhāna*).⁵⁷ In *avadāna* literature, instead of being performed in isolation, this special type of mental action is generally made in connection with a meritorious deed in order to control its fruit. As is well known, fervent aspiration plays an important role in Mahāyāna Buddhism in the form of a vow or a wish to become a buddha.⁵⁸ In *avadāna* literature however, fervent aspiration is less restricted in its use and includes the wish to become an arhat,⁵⁹ a pratyekabuddha,⁶⁰ or a

51. *Ap* 250.25, 282.9. In a more recent work, Rotman identifies a number of passages from the *Divyāvadāna* in which faith alone appears to produce great fruit. Andy Rotman, *Thus Have I Seen: Visualizing Faith in Early Indian Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 86–7.

52. A well known statement from the Pāli Canon reads, ‘Monks, I declare that intention is action. Having willed, one performs an action by body, speech [or] mind’ (*cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi. cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā*. Hardy, *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, 3: 415).

53. *Divy* 199–200.

54. *Ap* 70.6.

55. *Ap* 74.20.

56. *Ap* 76.20.

57. While the noun *praṇidhāna* is frequently used in the *Avadānaśataka* and the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Apadāna* seems to favour a verb such as *apaththayim* or *paththayim* to express a formal aspiration. eg. *Ap* 45.7, 474.8.

58. Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1932) 64–7.

59. e.g. *Divy* 193.6–7.

60. e.g. *Avś* I: 159.7–8.

buddha,⁶¹ or to occupy a specific position within the monastic order of a future buddha.⁶² In the *Divyāvadāna* we even find, for example, a fervent aspiration to own a purse which never runs out of gold coins.⁶³ Typically what happens is that, in the presence of a living buddha or pratyekabuddha, a person makes a fervent aspiration by means of a formal statement immediately after a meritorious deed is performed. In the *Avadānaśataka* a gardener gives the Buddha a toothpick and makes the following fervent aspiration in his presence, ‘by this foundation of virtue may I realise the awakening of a pratyekabuddha’ (*anenāhaṃ kuśalamūlena pratyekāṃ bodhiṃ sāksātkuryām*).⁶⁴ The Buddha then predicts that the gardener will indeed become a pratyekabuddha.⁶⁵ Another example comes from the *Apadāna* which narrates how, in a former birth, Upāli makes a successful fervent aspiration to attain the position of being foremost in the monastic code (*vinaya*).⁶⁶

In the *Avadānaśataka*, a fervent aspiration is often the culmination of an interesting series of synergetic interactions.⁶⁷ In these passages the protagonist makes a donation and, upon its reception, the item undergoes a miraculous transformation, which in turn inspires the protagonist to make a fervent aspiration. For example, in the story of the gardener from the *Avadānaśataka*, once donated, the toothpick transforms into a great tree, in the shade of which the Buddha gives a dharma talk.⁶⁸ This then inspires the gardener to make a fervent aspiration.

61. e.g. *Divy* 66.19–20.

62. e.g. *Ap* 38.23–4.

63. *Divy* 133.22–5.

64. *Avś* I: 159.7–8. For a discussion on this fervent aspiration and others from the *Avadānaśataka*, see Strong, ‘The Transforming Gift’, 230–7.

65. *Avś* I: 162.5.

66. *Ap* 38.23–4. Interestingly, a recently edited Gandhāran manuscript dated to approximately the first half of the first century CE also narrates a fervent aspiration. The passage is from a collection of pūrvayogas, a sister genre to the avadānas. Timothy Lenz, *A New Version of the Gāndhārī Dharmapada and a Collection of Previous-Birth Stories: British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments 16 + 25* (University of Washington Press, 2003), 165, 175–6.

67. Strong, ‘The Transforming Gift’, 233–7; Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, 158–9. For an example of this process in the *Divyāvadāna*, see *Divy* 226–7 (which has a parallel at *Avś* I: 125).

68. *Avś* I: 159.

Fervent aspiration is just one method among several in the *Dīvyāvadāna* by which people consciously control the fruit of a deed which has already been performed. The transference of merit is another such method. In one story, a series of beings experiencing unpleasant karmic fruit request that a relative from their previous life give alms to the monk Mahākātyāyana and that the ensuing reward be directed to them so that their karma may be exhausted.⁶⁹ In a number of *avadānas*, we find parents expressing the hope that after their deaths their child will make donations and direct the reward to them.⁷⁰ Another method for controlling the fruit of an action which has already been performed is confession. In several stories the protagonist speaks harshly and is requested to confess the fault in the hope that the karma is thereby exhausted.⁷¹ One of these *avadānas* confirms the success of this method by stating that, had he not confessed, he would have been reborn in a hell realm.⁷²

Conclusions

This examination of the narrative of three early *avadāna/apadāna* collections reveals a flexible and complex system having a dynamic synergy between performer and recipient at its centre. Once a deed is done, its performer may direct, or perhaps even destroy, the ensuing fruit. Most studies on *avadānas* are restricted to a single text and are therefore unable to provide insight on the cohesion of this genre of literature. This study has noted some discrepancies between the three collections in the way in which karma is narrated. However, these differences are rather secondary, suggesting that the system of karma, including its basic technical vocabulary, is represented in a reasonably consistent manner

69. *Dīvy* 10.27–9, 12.12–14, 14.28–15.1. These passages seem to be inconsistent with the formal doctrinal statements on karma in the *Dīvyāvadāna* and the *Avadānaśataka*; for example, ‘Actions do not disappear, even over hundreds of eons of aeons. When reaching fullness and the right time, they yield their fruit on embodied beings’ (*na praṇaśyanti karmāṇi kalpakoṭīśatair api / sāmāgrīṃ prāpya kālaṃ ca phalanti khalu dehinām*. e.g. *Avś* I: 80.13–14; *Dīvy* 131.14–15).

70. *Dīvy* 2.15–17, 99.6–8. Parallels are found in the *Avadānaśataka*, eg. *Avś* I: 14.15–15.2.

71. *Dīvy* 5.4–6, 54.27–55.2.

72. *Dīvy* 55.3–4.

across these three texts. This indicates there was a shared body of ideas and shared modes of narration that moved across language and sectarian boundaries. There are numerous textual parallels between *Avadānaśataka* and the *Divyāvadāna*. Due to greater differences in language and sectarian affiliation, what is more surprising are the parallels between the *Apadāna* and the *Divyāvadāna*,⁷³ and the *Apadāna* and the Sanskrit, Gāndhārī, Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *Anavatapta-gāthā*.⁷⁴ The extent of these connections might be illuminated by a close philological study comparing material from a number of avadāna collections. Research on this large body of literature is still in its infancy and there is a great deal that remains unexamined.

73. e.g. *Ap* 6.15–16 and *Divy* 79.21–2.

74. Richard Salomon, *Two Gāndhārī Manuscripts of the Songs of Lake Anavatapta (Anavatapta-gāthā): British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragment 1 and Senior Scroll 14* (University of Washington Press, 2008), 205–20.