

final life “(your) son is named Rāhula and “your” ‘daughter’ is called Uppalā”, but born in separate families (*ibid.* 518-520). She tells the Buddha that many extremely difficult tasks were done by her to accomplish her aspirations and she even sacrificed her life to reach him (*ibid.* 516 ff). According to the *Saddharmaratanaṅgaḷi* it took 100,000 aeons to accomplish her aspiration to be the second female chief disciple of the Buddha Gotama.

References

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UTTARAKURU, the “Northern Kuru country”, is a mythical region also known from Brahminical and Jaina sources. According to the *Ātānāṭiya Sutta*, in this mythical region of northern Kuru private ownership does not exist (*D.* III, 199), a circumstance also recorded in the *Divyāvadāna*.¹ The (Mūla-) Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* notes that for this reason the idea of theft was unknown among the Northern Kurus (*T.* XXIV, 536b23).² The Pāli commentaries explain that in this region houses do not exist, and people just sleep on the ground (*ThagA.* III, 176). According to the **Lokaprajñ aptyabhidharma Śāstra*, the inhabitants of Uttarakuru totally abstain from killing and observe a vegetarian diet (*T.* XXXII, 201a3), to which the **Lokasthāna Sūtra* adds that there is no evil at all in this region (*T.* I, 281a1).

The *Ātānāṭiya Sutta* offers a detailed account of this country, listing the names of its different cities, its king and ministers. A discourse found in the *Dīrgha Āgama* and the **Lokasthāna Sūtra* also devote considerable space to a description of this mythical region, depicting its wealth of trees, fruits and flowers, and the beauty of its lakes (*T.* I, 117c15 and *T.* I, 279c26).³ According to the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, only bipeds or quadrupeds live in Northern Kuru, as animals without legs and animals with more than four legs are not found (*T.* XXVII, 867a3). The *Dīrgha Āgama* discourse specifies that in Uttarakuru no mosquitoes, scorpions or snakes are found, nor do tigers or other evil animals live in this region (*T.* I, 118a⁴).

The same discourse also notes that the winds are neither cold nor hot in this country, summer and winter are unknown, and dust or dirt do not appear as the ground is pleasant and as if smeared by oil, opening by itself at the time of defecation or urination and closing by itself afterwards. The rice in Uttarakuru grows on its own accord and without husk, is of divine taste, and will be cooked on stoves that operate without fire and without any need for human labour, a description found in related terms also in the *Ātānāṭiya Sutta* (*D.* III, 199) and in the **Lokasthāna Sūtra* (*T.* I, 280b6).

The Pāli commentaries mention a wish-fulfilling type of tree that can be found in Northern Kuru (*AA.* II, 34). The *Yogācārabhūmi* explains that this tree will spontaneously manifest whatever possession or wealth people may desire (*T.* XXX, 298b21). According to the **Mandhātāvadāna*, even clothing is provided by the trees in this region (*T.* III, 395a11). The *Dīrgha Āgama* account and the **Lokasthāna Sūtra* describes several such trees, one of which provides clothing, while others provide perfumes, garlands, musical instruments and other utensils (*T.* I, 118a16 and *T.* I, 280a13).

The Pāli commentaries locate Uttarakuru to the north of Jambudīpa, indicating that it is surrounded by the sea and measures ten-thousand *yojanas* in extent (*MA.* IV, 223). The existence of Northern Kuru appears to be part of the set-up of a world system, since in a thousand-fold world system a thousand Uttarakurus can be found (*A.* I, 227; *A.* V, 59). The same country may also provide the wife for a wheel-turning king (*MA.* IV, 227).

According to the *Dirgha Āgama* account, diseases are not found in Uttarakuru and its inhabitants are always strong and of happy demeanour (*T. I*, 119a13). The inhabitants of Uttarakuru are well proportioned and resemble each other so closely that it is not easy to distinguish them one from another. The bondage of love is not known in Uttarakuru, and according to the **Lokasthāna Sūtra* the idea "my wife" does not exist (*T. I*, 280b10). The *Dirgha Āgama* account explains that when the males experience the arising of lust, they just look at a woman. The woman will then follow the man to the next grove. To avoid incest, the trees will withhold their shade if the man and the woman are close blood relatives, on realizing of which the two leave each other. If they are not blood relatives, the trees will bend over so as to provide shade, and the two will amuse themselves with each other to their heart's desire for up to seven days. The woman will then give birth within seven or eight days, and the child will grow up within seven days without any need to be cared for by the mother.

The *Dirgha Āgama* discourse also indicates that the inhabitants of Northern Kuru all have the same life span. When someone passes away, this does not cause any sorrow. The corpse will be adorned and left at a crossroad, from where it is taken away by birds, a way of disposing of the corpse also recorded in the **Lokasthāna Sūtra* (*T. I*, 280c22).

The *Dirgha Āgama* discourse concludes its description by pointing out that rebirth in the land of Northern Kuru is the fruit of observing the ten wholesome courses of action (*T. I*, 119b4), and the **Lokasthāna Sūtra* notes that those who live in Northern Kuru naturally continue to observe these ten (*T. I*, 280c14). This makes it understandable why, according to both discourses, whoever passes away from Northern Kuru is bound to be reborn in heaven.

The Pāli *Vinaya* reports an occasion when the Buddha went to collect food in Uttarakuru (*Vin. I*, 28). The **Mahāsammatarāja Sūtra* specifies that on that occasion he availed himself of the spontaneously growing rice in that region (*T. III*, 960a3). To be able to collect food from Uttarakuru requires supernatural powers according to the (Mūla-) Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (*T. XXIV*, 168a4), and the Pāli *Vinaya* reports that, at

a time of famine, Mahāmoggallāna suggested that the monks should all be supplied with food from Northern Kuru (*Vin. III*, 7).

The absence of the notion of property in Uttarakuru comes up also in the Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan parallels to the *Ghaṭikāra Sutta*. The different versions of this discourse record an occasion when the Buddha Kassapa had come to beg food at the house of his lay-supporter Ghaṭikāra (*M. II*, 52). The latter was out, but his blind parents invited Buddha Kassapa to help himself to the food that had been prepared. The Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of this event specify that Buddha Kassapa did so in accordance with the custom of Northern Kuru.⁴ This remark helps to clarify the situation, since under normal circumstances it would be improper conduct for a *bhikkhu* (and therewith implicitly also for a Buddha) to just help himself to food (*Vin. IV*, 90).

A sobering perspective on the paradisiacal conditions in Uttarakuru is given in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. This discourse notes that though men of Northern Kuru are superior even to the gods of the Thirty-three in several respects, they are nevertheless inferior compared to the inhabitants of Jambudīpa in as much as courage, mindfulness and the living of the holy life is concerned (*A. IV*, 396). That is, in spite of all its advantages and pleasurable conditions, for one intent on pursuing the goal of liberation life in Uttarakuru will be detrimental. For those who wish to walk the path to freedom by engaging in mindfulness and perhaps also by going forth as a *bhikkhu* or a *bhikkhunī*, Jambudīpa still offers the best conditions.

Anālayo

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- 1 E.G. Cowell: *The Divyāvadāna*, Cambridge: University Press, 1886: 215.
- 2 *T.* stands for the Taishō edition.
- 3 For detailed descriptions of Northern Kuru cf. also *T. I*, 314a11 and *T. I*, 369a22.
- 4 *T. I*, 502a19; R. Gnoli: *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu*, Rome, 1978: 27,14; Derge edition 'dul ba ga 8a3 or Qianlong edition 'dul ba nge 7b1.

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