Research Essay

The *Buddhalakṣaṇa* and the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*

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Abstract

This is an examination of the thirty-two auspicious marks of the Buddha with reference to various Pali and Sanskrit texts. Most are simple lists of the characteristics of the mahāpuruṣa, but three – the Pali Lakkaṇa Sutta in Pali and the *Lalita Vistara* and *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtras* in Sanskrit – offer a more extended description and attempt to explain the origin and/or significance of the lakṣaṇas. This paper focuses on a section of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* (Book 39 of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*), which lists and frequently explains the Buddhalakṣaṇas. The study introduces a new translation of the passage from the original Sanskrit, and compares its descriptions to other relevant Pali, Sanskrit and Tibetan sources. In most cases the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* offers the most convincing explanation of the relevance and/or origin of the lakṣaṇa.

Introduction

The origin of the Mahāpuruṣa (‘great man’) concept in Hindu mythology is not known, but it is evidently very ancient, although not fully developed until Buddhist times.¹ The mahāpuruṣa manifests either as a cakravartin or a buddha depending on whether he remains a gṛhaustha – a householder – or a saṃnyāsin, a renunciant or homeless monk.² The cakravartin (‘wheel-roller’) is a world-ruler, the wheels of whose chariot roll everywhere without obstruction. Bharata was the first cakravartin and there are allegedly 11 more who followed him.³ He conquers the land and possesses the seven treasures of the wheel, elephant, horse, queen,
jewel, chancellor and counselor; but should he leave the life of a householder to wander as a monk, he becomes a Buddha, ‘the teacher of gods and men, a peerless guide needing no aid from another.’

The *mahāpuruṣa* was believed to possess 32 auspicious marks (dvātriṃśailaksanīka) on his body which are detailed in several early Buddhist scriptures including three Pali suttas, the *Lakṣaṇa Sutta* and *Mahāpadāna Sutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, and the *Brahmāyu Sutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya*, and a Sanskrit sutra, the *Lalita Vistara Sūtra*. There are also more or less complete lists in the *Mahāvastu*, the *Boddhisattvabhūmi*, *Mahāvyutpatti*, the *Ratnagotravibhāga śāstra*, the *Arthaviniścaya Sūtra*, the *Dharmasamgraha* and the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*. There are also numerous references in various Indian and Tibetan commentaries on the sutras. The *mahāpuruṣa* is born to a mother who also has 32 kinds of good qualities, which differ however, from those of her son.

Most of the above writings are simply lists of the great man’s 32 marks, with little or no exposition of their significance. However, three of the works do make such an attempt. The *Lakṣaṇa Sutta* explains the marks as resulting from the karma of the Buddha’s previous lives, but the connections it makes are at best tenuous and the explanations it offers contain many non-sequiturs. The *Lalita Vistara Sūtra* makes a more credible attempt to rationalize the physical marks and to show how they reflect the Buddha’s inner nature. But the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* interpretation of the 32 marks, where there is one, is by far the most sophisticated and intelligent.

This paper will examine the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*’s exposition of the 32 marks, with reference to other sutra and commentary descriptions, where appropriate. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* constitutes the last chapter of the *Avatāmsaka Sūtra*, or *Flower Ornament Scripture*, a monumental work (over 1500 pages in English translation) of early Mahāyāna Buddhism (1st or 2nd century C.E.). The passage on the 32 marks occurs as an apparent interpolation in the text of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. The only English translation of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* is that of Thomas Cleary as part of his English translation of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* from the Chinese. Cleary’s translation omits the passage on the 32 lakṣanās evidently because the Chinese manuscript from which he was working does not contain it. This study, then, includes, and is based on, the author’s translation from the Sanskrit of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* passage pertaining to the 32 marks.

To simplify reference to the three main texts we shall refer to them by abbreviations, with page references in parentheses: *Gy* for the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* (Sanskrit); *LkS* for the *Lakṣaṇa Sutta* (Pali) and *LkS-E* for the English translation by Rhys Davids; *LVS* for the *Lalita Vistara Sūtra* (Sanskrit) and *LVS-E* for the English translation by Gwendolyn Bays.
Ganḍavyūha Sūtra on the 32 lakṣaṇas

The Gvṇ tells the story of Sudhana, a young man in search of enlightenment who visits 53 sages, asking advice in his quest for enlightenment. In the town of Kapilavastu he visits Gopā, who has attained the “enlightening liberation whose sphere is observation of the ocean of concentrations of all enlightening beings” (1403). Gopā tells Sudhana about the "cosmic net of interrelation of all things," having entered into the “indivisible totality of all enlightening beings’ practices, the infinite web of illusion, infinite cosmic pervasion.” She then proceeds to tell him about her attainment of liberation many aeons ago, in a world called ‘Producing Fearlessness’ (abhaya-ṁ-karaṇa), in an age called ‘Superior Conduct’ (gati-pravaraṇaḥ), in a metropolis called ‘Magnificent Trees’ (druma-meru-śrī, a compound which actually means, ‘tree-Meru-splendour.’) Gopā then proceeds to tell Sudhana the story of the king Lord of Wealth (dhanapati) and his son Lord of Splendour (tejodhipati) who bore the 32 marks of the mahāpuruṣa. In the Sanskrit version there follows a long description, interpolated between the introduction and the story itself, of the 32 marks of a great man (dvā-trīṃśaṇa-mahāpuruṣa-lakṣaṇa).

Now in the capital, Druma-Meru-śrī, there was a king called Lord of Wealth who was ruler of a province. There were 84,000 women in the women’s quarter. There were 500 ministers. And he also had 500 sons endowed with numerous splendid forms, brave heroes all, in excellent form, able to vanquish the best soldiers, kind and good-looking. The king’s foremost, principal queen of the 84,000 was known as ‘Pregnant with the Splendour of the Lotus.’ She had a handsome son called Lord of Splendour, good-looking, beautiful to behold, whose body was well adorned with the 32 marks of a great man. These are his 32 marks.

Now the Sanskrit interpolation begins. It is about 65 lines long over three pages.

1) The king’s son Lord of Splendour stands firm with his hands and feet. He raises the soles of his feet equally and lays them down equally on the earth, and in stepping down completely with the soles of his two feet he touches the earth equally.

Gvṇ makes no further comment on this mark. In LVS-E (647) this feature reflects the Buddha’s firmness in “renunciation, good conduct and vows, in austerity and brahmacarya, never being diverted from observances, never
confused, possessing true firmness.” LkS-E (139) connects the mark with Buddha’s virtuous conduct in a previous life.

2) And on his two soles there appeared 1000 spokes with the same nave and felly visible, shining and complete in every way.

The LVS-E (647) calls this wheel the nandy-āvarta, the ‘happy-turning,’ and points out that the soles of the Buddha’s feet also bore a svastika. The thousand-spoked wheel represents the Buddha as refuge to all living beings, according to LVS-E. LkS-E’s interpretation (141) is similar and equally non-germane. The obvious interpretation – that this is a metaphor for the cakravartin’s (wheel-roller’s) ease and speed of movement – is alluded to only by N.H. Samtani in his commentary on the 32 marks in the Arthaviniścaya Sūtra,24 who points out that the Buddha leaves a wheel-like impression on the ground when he walks, even though, as some believe, he floats above the ground and only leaves an impression because of his supernatural powers. M.E. Burnouf mentions that this mark is quite popular and seen on many figures of the seated Buddha.25 The Sanskrit word sanābhi (‘having the same nave or centre’) also means ‘of kindred blood’ which suggests another dimension to the lakṣaṇa – the mutual interrelationship of all beings, because of countless lives led. Yet no commentator draws this explicit conclusion that the wheel represents our common connectedness.

3) His ankles are fixed high, very clear, most prominently embellished towards the upper side, shining brilliantly, filled with flowers [adorning] the splendour of his feet.

There is wide divergence in interpreting this mark – which, as Franklin Edgerton remarks, conveys an impression of “floundering in a mass of ignorance.”26 In the Ratnagotravibhāga śāstra the word is utsaṅga-pādatā, (utsaṅga = haunch) which suggests that the feature relates to padmāśana, i.e. the Buddha’s placement of his feet in the meditation posture, on his upper thigh.27 Burnouf thinks the term refers to Buddha’s extended ankle (saillant, i.e. protruding).28 The LVS (106) has utsaṅga-pāda which LVS-E (155) translates as “his stride is long.” LkS-E has “ankles like rounded shells and down on the body turning upward” (147),29 which the author sees as the result of the Buddha speaking in a previous life to the multitude “on their good, on righteousness, explaining to the multitude, … a bearer of welfare and happiness to living creatures....” etc. The Mahāvyutpatti gives yet another definition: “the joints of the ankles of the feet do not appear” (translating ucchaṅka-pādatā; Tibetan: ‘zhabs kyi long mo’i tshigs mi mngong pa’).30 The lotus posture seems the most likely explanation for this
feature, consistent with Gnυ where the final compound (pāda-cchavi...prabhāsvarā) may be understood to refer to the Buddha’s ankles exposed as they rest on his haunches.

4) Both the palms of the hands and soles of the feet of this person are reticulated – wonderful, well-proportioned, free from flaws, not flowing,31 in such a manner as the king of geese (the gander), whose dominion is firm.

LVS (106) has only jāla-aṅguli-hasta-pādaḥ (“web-fingers-hands-feet”), but tries to make sense of it later in the sūtra (LVS-E, 648), because “he has long skillfully gathered beings with the net of conversion, with giving, kind speech and helpfulness, with deeds that match words.” This is consistent with Gnυ, where the hastapādatale are “not flowing” because the net has no holes in it – i.e. it was made to catch people. LkS-E (145) suggests that the Buddha in a former life became “popular to the people, by the four bases of popularity,” namely giving, kind speech, good conduct and impartiality – as a result he acquired “hands and feet reticulated like a net” and “soft and tender hands and feet.” Samtani suggests that this Buddha feature may have resulted from the Buddha’s abstaining in a previous life “from slandering in order to keep the families of other beings united.”32 Kalidasa’s drama, šākuntalā, also contains a reference to the web fingers and toes of a great man in Act 7, line 16, when the king Duṣyanta notes that his son Sarvadamana has fingers connected by a web, a sign of a universal monarch – “shining like a single lotus opened by the early dawn, whose colour, redness, is blazing and having the interstices between its petals imperceptible.”33 Burnouf contests the interpretation that jāla refers to fingers and toes connected by a membrane and takes the expression literally, i.e. that Buddha had lines crossing his fingers, hands and feet because he tired his body and hands “à servir, à baigner et à frotter de substances onctueuses son père, sa mère et d’autres personnages respectables.”34 We must assume, since there is a medical condition in which children are born with webs connecting their fingers and toes,35 and the metaphor of catching beings in a liberative net seems apt to describe the Buddha’s faith, that Burnouf is probably not correct in this case.

5) He has a condition of lengthened-foot-heel, pure and clear and emitting the splendour of the colours of all jewels.

Most commentators agree that this means the Buddha has broad heels, including the Tibetan Mahāvyutpatti,36 although LVS-E (155) translates it as “the soles of his feet are broad,” which seems to be a mistake. The text attributes this feature – elsewhere described as ‘wide foot’ (LVS-E, 648) – to
the fact that the Buddha has “long renounced the taking of life.” The LkS-E (143) gives the same reason, adding that he “dwelt gentle and compassionate, merciful and friendly to all living creatures,” and also attributes his long fingers and toes and straight limbs to these same past life behavioural causes.

6) His fingers are long and rounded, with extended joints. He places his fingers on the earth equally and he lifts them up (equally).

This seems to be a reference to the Bhūmisparśa mudrā, when the Buddha summoned the Earth as witness to his attainment of buddhahood. Buddha Akṣobhya is usually depicted with this mudrā. However this is the only sutra which contains such an allusion. LVS-E (648) reads, “he is called the one with long fingers, because he has long sustained living beings.” LkS-E (143) subsumes it under the previous category. There is no other reference to ‘extended joints,’ although this compound (samāyata-saṃdhayāḥ) could simply be an intensification of ‘dīrgha’ (‘long’).

7) The palms of his hands and soles of feet are tender, in close contact, gentle [covered] with an excess of soft down. With them he touches woman, man, boy or girl – they are all joyous-minded, filled with the flowering of the highest pleasure.

Edgerton claims that kācilindika is corrupt and refers to some kind of soft textile. Monier Williams has it as a wrong reading for kākaciṇḍika, which is the down on the pod of the Abrus precatorious plant. Gnv is the only writing to link Buddha’s touch with a result. LVS-E (648) attributes Buddha’s soft hands and feet to the cause that he has “long honoured and served those deserving offerings, never wearying to act for parents, śramaṇas, brāhmīns and teachers, giving baths and massages, giving ointments, oils and liniments.” LkS-E (143) has only “tender and soft his fingers’ touch”, lumping it in with projecting heels, long fingers and toes and divinely straight limbs.

8) He has shanks like a black antelope. His two shanks appear tapering, rounded and nobly formed, like those of a black antelope, the king of deers.

No one is capable of pursuing or catching him, nor is he fatigued in the process.

If I am reading the third sentence correctly, the Gnv adds a new dimension to this lakṣaṇa, equating the Buddha’s antelope-like shanks to the fact that he has outdistanced all his followers. Though they can not catch up to him,
nevertheless they are not fatigued in the journey (vraja). This occurs nowhere else in the sutras. The LVS-E (648-9) says that the Buddha’s gazelle limbs are the result of promulgating the Dharma and providing refuge to beings faced with old age, disease and death. The LkS-E (148) attributes this mark to the fact that the Buddha was a “zealous learner in craft, trade or science, in conduct or action…” in a former life. Burnouf opines that mrgarājñāh refers to a lion and suggests the translation should read “il a la jambe du lion ou de l’antilope femelle.”

9) Indeed he has seven protuberances and Lord of Splendour is the son of a king. Two protuberances are on his two feet, rounded, well-born, very complete, an invisible connection one to the other, well-formed and good-looking; two are on the hands, two on the shoulder and one on the back of the neck.

The LVS-E (650) has “seven lofty parts” which is echoed in the Mahāvyutpatti (bdun mtho ba, ‘seven lofty things’). But according to Edgerton it means ‘protuberances, prominences, swellings, elevations.’ No one seems to know what these are. LVS-E (650) attributes these prominences to that fact that Buddha “has long shown respect to parents and teachers, to masters and superiors….to beggars…to all…” and gave them everything they wanted. LkS-E (144) translates the lakṣaṇa as “seven convex surfaces” (‘sattussado’ in Pali) and says they occur on both hands, on both feet, on both shoulders and on the trunk and claims they resulted from the Tathāgata giving “choice, well-flavoured, tasty, dainty foods…and drinks.” Why these 7 protuberances should be the mark of a mahāpuruṣa is a mystery.

10) He has a hidden penis, withdrawn in a sheath, the mark of a great man. He has a well-concealed covering, submerged in a hidden penis sheath, just as elephants or horses of good breed. Though he is without a home, no woman or man, nor boy or girl, nor senior or middle-aged person, young person nor teacher, nor someone representing a teacher – looked elsewhere [than to the Buddha] for their own special enjoyments or abundant desires.

The sense of this lakṣaṇa seems to be that the Buddha’s genitals are hidden as he doesn’t need to use them, not being interested in traditional relationships and possessions (i.e. houses) with which the function of genitals (i.e. procreation and children) is associated. People are attracted to the Buddha because he satisfies their spiritual rather than material desires. This theme is touched on in LVS-E (649) where the it is told that this mark reflects the fact
that the Buddha “has long given all that he could to followers of brahmacarya, to śramaṇas, brāhmins and others, giving clothing to the naked, never approaching others’ wives, praising the qualities of brahmacarya, guarding his modesty and chastity and following observances.”

This explanation contrast with LkS-E (152) where this particular lakṣaṇa is attributed to Buddha having re-united long lost relatives in a previous life.

11) The king’s son Lord of Splendour also has the upper part of his body resembling a lion. He has a body risen in regular order, - i.e. high - with an eminence, well situated, an excess [like] the noble king of beasts, his breast, surrounded and expanded [because of it].

LVS-E (650) attributes this quality to the Buddha’s “obedience, speaking words of welcome and security,… sheltering those seeking refuge, etc.” LkS-E (155) offers a similarly unconvincing explanation, citing Buddha’s desire for others’ welfare. What the samucchrayaḥ is is unknown, unless it refers to the lion’s muscular chest.

12) He had a heaped up/piled up breast, his body furnished with a well-proportioned eminence, placed in equal share over his whole body; his limbs are whole, hanging down, i.e. not bent, [showing] an excess of splendour outflowing like fruits and jewels.

No one seems to understand what this lakṣaṇa signifies. LVS-E (155) translates antarāṃsa ‘chest and shoulders’ and later as ‘broad shoulders’ LVS-E (650). Samtani takes it as referring to the space between his shoulders (i.e. breast).43 Mahāvyutpatti takes this to mean that the space between the shoulder blades is filled in (‘thal gong rgyas pa’: ‘flesh between the shoulder-blades filled in’).44 LkS-E (155) has ‘there is no furrow between his shoulders.’ None of the explanations for the mark are very germane, LkS-E lumping it with mark #11 above, and LVS-E (650) rationalizing that Buddha has “long weighed his own faults carefully, not seeing weakness in others as failings, giving up the source of divisiveness and argument, reciting mantras, and guarding well against extremes of speech and action.” The samucchrayaḥ is still a mystery, unless it refers to the flesh between his shoulders.

13) He also has rounded shoulders. His shoulders are rounded, full, handsome and well nourished.

LkS-E (155) has this as ‘rounded bust’, but most of the others seem to agree
on shoulders, although LVS-E (155) has ‘well-rounded arms’ where LVS (105) clearly gives ‘shoulders’ (‘skandah’). Burnouf says it can mean the upper arm. The explanations in LVS-E and LkS-E have nothing to do with the actual laksana. LkS-E (155) attributes the mark to the Buddha’s concern for others’ welfare, while LVS-E (650-1) cites a panoply of reasons ranging from his respect for others, his knowledge of the sāstras and his meditative practices.

14) The great man also has hanging arms. He rubs his knee caps with his hands without bending and touches [them], with his body standing at full height.

All sources seem to agree on this point, but there is no logical explanation attempted for why a Buddha should have this mark; it may obliquely refer to a cakravartin’s archery skills which are often related to arm-length. LkS-E (154), gives Buddha’s desire to contemplate the “good will of the folk…” in a former birth as the reason, whereas LVS-E (649) says the mark reflects the fact that “he has long guarded his hands and feet, acting in body, speech and mind with love, intent on never harming beings.”

15) He has great, straight limbs a further mark of a great man; one who has limbs with an equal number of atoms, possessing all below; tranquil limbs, long limbs, gracious limbs and limbs of joy.

The 6-word compound sarva-avara-upeta-paramāṇu-sama-gātrah is problematic. The words seem to suggest that the Buddha’s limbs are ‘bhṛhat’ (‘great’) because they incorporate all lesser sentient beings within them. LV lacks this laksana and LkS-E (143) renders it as “his limbs are divinely straight,” attributing this feature primarily to the Buddha’s not taking life and dwelling in compassion, being friendly to all creatures in a previous life (same as the projecting heels and long fingers laksana). The Gnv is the only source which actually tries to explain the laksana in a directly relevant way, even though its meaning is not immediately transparent.

16) His neck is like a conch shell, one of the 32 signs he has achieved. His is a noble minded voice. His taste conductors are great, bordering the neck and face, all smooth, even, whole and complete.

This mark is common to most sources. LVS (105) has it as “he has an excellent sense of taste” (rasarasāgravān) and LVS-E (652) describes this
mark as “the best elixir” which Buddha possesses because “he has long harmed no sentient being….” LkS-E (156) describes his taste as ‘supremely acute’ with sensations of taste produced in the throat, ‘diffused everywhere,’ and attributes this mark to ‘harming no creatures.’ Some works (e.g. the Arthaviniścaya Sūtra\(^{47}\)) take kambugrīvatā (a shell-like neck) and rasarasāgratā (keen sense of taste) as two separate lakṣānas.

17) He has also obtained the ‘lion’s jaw’ mark of a great man with a tight, contracted pronunciation in speech,\(^48\) a completely round mouth, a well-formed, pure round mouth, not characterized by an expansion of the throat or the mouth passage being extended [during speech].\(^49\)

Gṛv, LVS-E and LkS-E all try and explain this lakṣana in terms of the Buddha’s speaking ability. Edgerton says Buddha’s speech was tight, not loose which I interpret to mean directed, focused and forceful, for which qualities, the lion provides a good metaphor.\(^50\) LVS-E and LkS-E both relate this Buddha characteristic to speech cause or effect. LkS-E (163) says that Buddha obtained this mark of a great man because in a past life he “put away idle talk, revolted from idle talk, and became one who spoke in due season, in accordance with the facts, words full of meaning….“ LVS-E (651) says that Buddha is called the one with a lion’s jaw “because he has long given up everything, like a beggar, addressing sweet words to all who approach, despising none, deceiving none, turning none away, fulfilling their desires with gifts and firm support.”

18) He has (obtained) ‘forty equal teeth,’ a mark of a great man, with whole, entire teeth. In the enjoyment of a little food at one time, he eats without breaking the food, revolving it in his mouth so much so that not even a single drop of food [is broken].

Aside from the fact that there is no such thing as a human with 40 teeth (34 is the maximum), most of the scriptural tradition is in agreement on this point. The LVS-E (651) attributes this sign to the fact that Buddha “has given up harsh words and chants which foster divisiveness, eager to bring all into accord, speaking against slander and argument, reciting mantras of conciliation.” The LkS-E (651) is very similar, citing Buddha’s rejection of ‘abusive speech’ in a past life as the motivating factor behind this lakṣana. Once again only the Gṛv has the intriguing description of the Buddha eating without breaking even a single drop of food. Although the significance of this particular characteristic is not obvious, it may have something to do with
vegetarianism, as it is impossible to eat meat without cutting or breaking it. The significance of the number 40 itself is less problematic, considering the Hindu/Buddhist fascination for numbers and lists. The LVS-E (21) itself has a long list of 40 actions, aspirations, liberations, etc., and it is no secret that in the Western religious tradition 40 is just as evocative a number.

19) He also has (achieved the state of) ‘close-and-equal teeth,’ the mark of a great man. His teeth are close and equal, free from flaws, contiguous, even, well-proportioned; with them he enjoys his food without attachment, without ticking, without obstruction, without putrefaction or ulceration or covering over and without sticking fast.

Several of these descriptive words are technical and obscure. Edgerton tries to make some sense of them as per the references above. None of the other sūtras contain any relevant description of what is meant by this lakṣana, and Gnv offers a valuable glimpse into early first millennium concepts of dental hygiene. LVS-E (651) relates the sign to the Buddha’s compassionate use of speech and teaching and LkS-E (165) lumps it with the preceding lakṣana. LVS-E (651) also translates ‘avirala’ as ‘firm and good,’ which Burnouf maintains is correct, along with ‘close.’ The Tibetan Mahāvyutpatti translates it as ‘well-arranged teeth’ (tshems thags bzang ba).

20) He also has (achieved the state of) even teeth, the mark of a great man. His teeth are not deficient, not excessive, not bent upwards or downwards, not broken, equal throughout including the middle, not lost, not split. The prince’s teeth are very white, free from afflictions (nir-upa-kleša), very bright, purified, well put together and lovely.

Some sources (e.g. the Ratnagotravibhāga and Mahāvyutpatti) have this as two points (‘sama’ and ‘suśukla’, ‘very white’), but the Gnv appears to treat it as one, for if they are considered as two the lakṣaṇas total 33. In a rare attempt to directly correlate the physical mark with the spiritual, LVS-E (651) accounts for Buddha’s white teeth because of his ‘white’ disposition: “he has long abandoned the dark side and accumulated the white roots of virtue, giving up the growth of dark deeds while encouraging the white, painting the caityas of the Tathāgatas with a mixture of chalk and milk, giving milk, cooked food, white garments, garlands of sumana, vārṣika and dhanuskari flowers, and beautiful bouquets of white flowers.” Only the Gnv goes into this kind of detail about the nature of the Buddha’s teeth. LkS-E (165) has “even and very lustrous teeth” for this lakṣaṇa and attributes it to Buddha’s
“putting away wrong livelihood” in a previous life and not cheating and hurting people

21) He also has (achieved the state of) an excellent, long tongue, the mark of a great man. His extended tongue is thin, soft, very tender, suitable, pleasing, quickly moving, able to cover the globe of his face,\(^5^9\) endowed with the resolution to explain the complete letter and spirit of the path of truth.\(^6^0\)

The last 8-word compound is a real mouthful, but straightforwardly expresses the meaning of this laksana. According to Edgerton, ‘vyañjana’ has the technical sense of ‘sound’ and contrasts with ‘arthha’ which is ‘meaning.’\(^6^1\)

Why Buddha’s tongue should be able to cover his face is unknown; the only other places it is mentioned is in the Arthaviniścaya Sūtra\(^6^2\) and the Brahmāyu Sutta.\(^6^3\) LVS-E (162) connects the feature with Buddha’s abandonment of erroneous speech, reciting the Dharma, etc., as does LkS-E (162) which claims that the feature arises because in a former life Buddha “revolted from rough language and became an habitual speaker of whatsoever words are blameless, pleasant to the ear, lovely, reaching to the heart…” etc.

22) The prince has the voice of Brahma, delightful in tone. His acts of speaking in talk and conversation are like the twittering of bird cries and beautiful songs and his voice sounds like a song with the tones of all instruments.\(^6^4\) He raises his voice, rejoicing for all the world, developing the path and delighting in it by speech. Full of the Brahma voice, he transcends the circle of [just] his audience and he answers the cry of all.

Eloquently presented, the description universalizes this laksana, and is unparalleled in any other source. LkS-E (162) includes this characteristic with the previous one; LVS-E (652) relates it to the fact that Buddha has long given up false speech and his words are “loving and compassionate, joyous pleasant, sweet and sympathetic…” Some sources liken the voice to a bird (‘kalaviṅka’),\(^6^5\) which Burnouf concludes is a sparrow (‘passereau’). The Tibetans translate this laksana as ‘Brahma-like melodious voice’ (‘tshangs pa i dbyangs’),\(^6^6\) and note that Brahma’s voice had 60 sets of overtones.\(^6^7\)

23) The prince had very dark blue eyes, transparent eyes, pure eyes, clear eyes, serene eyes, wise eyes, good-looking eyes, eyes shining brightly, cheerful eyes.
LVS (105) also has ‘abhinīla-netra’ (translated as ‘deep black eyes in LVS-E, 155) and LkS-E (157) renders it as ‘intensely blue’, conflating it with the next characteristic, ‘eyelashes like a cow.’ The Mahāvyutpatti adds ‘ba’i rdzi ma lta bu’ (‘like the eyelashes of a cow’) and also combines the two characteristics in one.68 as does V.S. Agrawala, “The Thirty-Two Marks of the Buddha Body.”69 LVS-E (652) says the feature reflects the fact that the Buddha “has long gazed upon beings benevolently, like a father…regarding all with compassion…having gazed at the caityas of the Tathāgatas without blinking,…” LkS-E (157) equates the feature with a past life of “looking not askance nor obliquely nor furtively, but with upright candid and lofty mind contemplating people with affectionate eyes…”

24) The prince has the eyelashes of a cow. They are the home of the eye, perfectly pure and lotus-hued, the same colour as the eye, a smooth colour like the eye, a beautiful colour like the eye, an extension of the colour of the eye, a completely saturated, thoroughly imbued colour as with the eye.

As noted above, in many cases this feature is joined with the previous one. LVS-E (652) attributes it to the fact that the Buddha “has long abandoned base thoughts and feelings, his brow never wrinkled, his face ever smiling…” No commentator makes the obvious connection between Buddha’s eyebrows and the sacredness of the animal in Hindu culture (gopa - ‘cowherd’ - being one of Kṛṣṇa’s titles and ‘Gautama,’ - ‘most cows’ or ‘largest cow’ - being Buddha’s clan name).

25) Appearing in between his eyebrows he had a circle of hair, beautiful, soft, suitable, very delicate, fuzzy, [the hairs] in mutual contact, pure, clear, the colour of snow, like a cluster of moons and a lustre of splendour like a very white garland of rays.

This is the famous ‘third eye’ which emanates from Buddha’s forehead at the beginning of the Lotus Sūtra and lights up the worlds. The ūrnā is the sign of future grandeur, according to Burnouf.70 And the Tibetans translate it as ‘mdzod spu’ or ‘hair of treasure,’71 which Illuminator Tibetan English Dictionary identifies as a single hair.72 LVS (105) describes it as ‘hima-rajata-prakāśā’ or ‘shining moon white’ and later (LVS-E, 653) says the circle of hair curls to the right, attributing the ūrnā to Buddha’s offerings and teachings and immense accumulation of virtue. LkS-E (160) says that Buddha has “between the eyebrows a hairy mole, white and like soft cotton-down” resulting from a past life where he “put away lying... and
became a truth-speaker.”

26) On his head an excrescence had come into being. It was beautiful (well-born) wholly circular, placed in the middle (of his head), an ornament for his hair, manifested as 100,000 koṭis of jewel-petalled lotuses, the chief thing in the middle of his head, unlimited and placed equidistant all around.

‘ahārdhyatā’ is untranslatable and may be a misprint. Burnouf devotes a long discussion to this laksana, as it figures so prominently in Buddhist art. The word usṇīṣa has been variously viewed as a turban (the primary Sanskrit meaning), a manner of doing the hair and thirdly, an excrescence (i.e., growth) on the top of the head. He decides on the latter, which is how the Tibetans take it. LVS-E (653) translates it both as a “protuberance of the skull” and “the one with the unseen diadem” because “he has long bowed his head to the feet of his parents, the feet of śramanas, brāhmīns, and spiritual teachers…..” ‘Diadem’ is one of the sanskrit meanings for usṇīṣa, although it seems out of place in this context. LkS-E (158) has ‘head like a royal turban’ and attributes it to Buddha’s past life when he was a “leader among men in goodness, foremost in virtuous deed and word and thought…” etc., In the Tibetan tradition the protuberance results from the practice of ‘pho-ba’ or ‘transference’, one of the 6 yogas of Naropa where one practices ejecting the consciousness through the top of the head (while alive) in preparation for death. This practice is described in Evans-Wentz, Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines; continued practice results in “a swelling-up of the flesh on the crown of the head [around the aperture of Brahmā].’ ‘Gaṇḍa-vyūha’ itself is often translated as ‘topknot’- i.e. the cone-shaped elevation on the crown of the Buddha’s head – and refers to the usṇīṣa.

27) The prince has fine skin. On his body he had no dust, no dirt, no wetness, no creases, no wrinkles, no weakness, no fracture, no morbid displacement of the humours, no spreading of a cutaneous eruption, no inequality and no bone decay.

Here is jāla used in a negative meaning for ‘creases’ which further suggests that Burnouf’s reading of the reticulation feature is wrong. LVS combines this feature and the next into one (sūksma-suvarna-varṇa-chavi) in the intial list (155), but then separates them into two when explicating their meaning (649). His ‘fine, smooth skin’ results from Buddha giving to parents etc. worthy offerings like baths and ointments, clarified butter, liniments of sesame oil, good clothing, etc. His golden skin comes from love and patience and adorning the caityas of the Tathāgatas with golden objects and sprinkling
gold dust all around. The LkS-E (149) explanation seems to have nothing to do with the mark (“his skin so delicately smooth that no dust cleaves to his body”); in his former life the Buddha-to-be questioned recluses or brahmins about the meaning of life, asking, “What is good? What is bad? What is right? What is wrong?” Mahāvyutpatti also combines this feature with the next.79

28) The prince has golden colour skin. His appearance is like gold, the gold from Jambu, with a halo extending in all directions, decorated all around with a circle of splendour blazing like gold; his body is also decorated with a clear, splendid light, and fragrance exudes from every pore of his skin.

This is the companion laksana to the previous attribute. LkS-E (150-151) renders it as “his complexion is like bronze and his skin like gold (Pali: svūnavanāh hoti kaṇṇanasannibhattaco), the result of a former life where he lived “without wrath, full of serenity”, never manifesting the baser emotions.

29) The prince had hairs one by one. Every single one of his hairs in every single one of his pores appears coiled, turning to the reverential (to the right), the colour of a dark-blue/green cat’s eye gem, well arranged, well situated, well rooted.

This feature is shortened to ‘ekaika-romā’ (‘hair, one by one”) in LVS (105). LkS-E (160) has “down growing in separate hairs, all over his body,” and includes it with the ūṛṇā feature. LVS-E (650) attributes ‘each hair rising distinctly’ to the Buddha’s ‘attendance on panḍitas, asking about virtue and non-virtue…clearing away debris from the caityas of the Tathāgatas, removing the spiders and worms, the dirt and faded flowers, the cobwebs and weeds.” Turning to the right is a traditional Hindu/Buddhist showing of respect – one circumambulates a person (or a holy shrine) always with the right shoulder facing the person or object.

30) The prince had hair on the upper part of his body (or ‘The hair on the prince’s body turns upwards’) which was [turned to the right], incapable of turning back, not to be turned back, unadulterated.

This laksana continues the former. Both LS and LV have them as two as well, although LkS-E (147) has ‘the down on his body turns upward…,’ as does the Tibetan Mahāvyutpatti (sku’i spu gyen tu phyogs pa, ‘the hairs of the body
turn upward’), while LVS (105) has ārdhva-agra-abhiprakṣiṇa-āvarta-romāh (‘hair turning to the right, their tips upwards’). Gīv has ārdhva-aṅga-romā, which seems to mean ‘upper-body hair’ (as does Burnouf60), but the phrase probably means hairs of the body turning upwards as most interpret it. LkS-E (147) includes this laksana with the ‘ankles like rounded shells’ (see #3 above). LVS-E (648) attributes the characteristic to Buddha’s habit of circumambulating worthy persons and caityas; avinivartaniya and apratyudvartaniya are clearly also double-entendres for Buddha’s spiritual progress, which allows no regression.

31) The prince has (achieved the mark of a great man, having the condition of) hair which is the colour of sapphire. He has hair appearing like the dark blue jewels of Vairocana, lovely, soft, nicely curled, ring-like, turning to the right, well rooted and grown, unsurpassed, not damaged, not dishevelled, and abiding in a proper condition of evenness.

This laksana is quite different from LVS (105) where the Buddha’s hair is also turned to the right and likened to the colour of a peacock’s tail (mayūra-kalāpa). Burnouf suggests that the dark colour and curls in Buddha’s hair may point to an African origin and leaves it up to the reader to decide between divergent theories.61 LS does not have this feature. Tibetan only has dbu skra g-yas su ‘khyil ba, ‘head hairs curling to the right,’ and fails to note the colour.62 LVS-E (155) has both features but there is no explanation of the feature’s genesis.

32) Moreover, the king’s son Lord of Splendour has (achieved the mark of a great man, the state of) roundness like a banyan tree, his roundness is lovely on all sides, [and reflecting that fact] he is good to all, he is kind to everyone. He acted agreeably in their presence, even when [people] were insatiable. Even from the back, from the right, from the left, when going, or standing, when sitting, or speaking, or even when he was silent, he acted agreeably winning people’s hearts, even when they were insatiable.

The expression ‘atṛpti-kara’ is problematic as it means literally ‘not giving satisfaction.’ Thus it is an unlikely epithet of the Buddha. ‘atṛpti’ also means ‘insatiability’ so I have translated it as referring to the ‘everyone’ with whom Buddha is interacting. The ‘kara’ (‘causer’, ‘maker’, ‘doer’), however, does not fit very well. An alternative translation is ‘in his presence, he is an agreeable sight, causing insatiability’ (to remain there).
None of the other writings have anything similar to Gṛ. LkS-E (138) renders this lākṣāṇa as: “his proportions have the symmetry of the banyan-tree; the length of his body is equal to the compass of his arms, and the compass of his arms is equal to his height.” For the explanation of its origin it is lumped together with the feature #14, re: Buddha’s arms reaching his knees. LVS-E (649) links this feature to Buddha’s moderation, restraint and helping other people. Mahāvṛttapatti has “his body is broad and extensive like the fīcus religiosa” (shing nya gro dha ltar chu zheng gab pa).83 Clearly the repetition of samantabhadra in its literal sense above is meant to remind us of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra (the ādi-buddha) who is also associated with Buddha Vairocana (‘belonging to the sun’), mentioned in the previous lākṣāṇa description.

O son of a good family, the body of the king’s son “Lord of Splendour” is highly decorated with these 32 marks of a great man. He shows a gracious aspect to all beings (apratiṅkūla, ‘not obstinate’ or ‘yielding’), fulfilling all their purposes, causing all beings joy.

So ends this remarkable section of the Gṛ. There is nothing like it in all the literature consulted. Most works are simple lists (Māhavyutpaṭṭi, Ratnogotrabhīṣa, Bodhisattvabhūmi, Arthaviniścaya Sūtra, Mahāvastu, etc.). Only two try to explain the marks in any way. The LV is a work of great devotional beauty and profound faith, but the lākṣāṇas’ explanations usually have little direct relevance to the attribute. This is even worse in the LS where there is an almost complete disconnect between attribute and its cause. The translator, T.W.R. Davids opines that “most of the marks are so absurd, considered as marks of any human, that they are probably mythological in origin...our Suttanta seems gravely ironical in the contrast it makes between the absurdity of the marks and the beauty of the ethical qualities they are supposed to mean.”84

Conclusion

Are they so absurd? It was a natural human tendency to try and universalize the Buddha - not only his teachings, but his body as well, and the 32 lākṣāṇas are what resulted. In Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism, body, speech and mind are a unified whole, so it is only natural that each would interrelate and reflect the other. No doubt they were taken over from the ancient Hindu tradition of the mahāpuruṣa. No doubt much of the significance of the features was lost and many of the lākṣāṇa interpretations are contrived and draw a fanciful connection where none really exists. Yet in several cases Gṛ succeeds in explaining them so well, they seem a natural reflection and expression of the
Buddha’s greatness and his mission of love and compassion.

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**Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra:** Sanskrit (Romanized) passage on the 32 marks:

tasyāṃ khalu druma-meru-śriyāṃ rāja-dhānyāṃ dhana-patir nāma
rāja abhūt maṇḍalikaḥ / tasya catur-aśīti-stri-sahasrāṇy antahpuram
abhūt / pañca ca amāṭya-śatāny abhūvan / rājñāḥ khalu punar
dhana-pateḥ pañca putra-śatāny abhūvan sarvēṣaṁ śūrāṇāṁ vīrāṇāṁ
varāṇa-gūpāṇāṁ para-sainya-pramārdakāṇāṁ prāśādi-kāṇāṁ
darśānyāṇāṁ parama-śubha-varṇa-puskalaṭāyā samanvāgaṭāṇāṁ /
rājñāḥ khalu punar dhana-pateḥ padma-śī-गर्भa-saṃbhavā nāma
agramaḥśī abhūt teṣām catur-āśīteḥ stri-sahasrāṇāṁ pramukhā /
tasyāṃ tejodhipatir nāma putro ‘bhūd abhirūpāḥ prāśādi
darśānyāḥ dvā-triṁśa-mahāpurusa-laksana-samalāṃkṛta-
Kāyaḥ / tasyaṃ vai dvā-triṁśa-mahāpuruṣa-lakṣaṇāḥ abhūvan /

1 yad uta / supratiṣṭhīta-pāṇi-pādaḥ tejodhipati-rāja-kumāro ‘bhūt /
saṃ samah-prthivyāṃ pāda-talav utkṣipati saṃ sam niṃśipati
niṃśipamś ca sarvāvat pāda-talabhyāṃ saṃ samah-prthiviṁ
saṃspṛṣati /

2 pāda-talayoś cāsya cakrāṇi jāṭāni sahasrārāni saṃbhūni
Sanemikāni sarvakāra-paripūrṇāni surucirāni darśānyāṇi /

3 ucchāṅka-pādatā cāsya abhinirvṛttābhūt suvyakta-paramopābhitā
upari pāda-cchavi-kusuma-garbhattireka-prabhāsva rā /

4 ubhe cāsya hastā-pāda-tale jālini abhūtāṃ vicitra-
suvibhaktacakrāparisrāvini tad-yathā dhṛta-raṣṭrasya haṃsā-rājasya /

5 āyata-pāda-prśipitā asyaabhinirvṛttābhūt pariśuddhā prabhāsva rā
sarva-ratna-varṇāvabhāsa-pramuktaḥ /

6 dīṛghā asyaṅgulayo ‘bhūvan vrṭṭāh samāyata-saṃdhayaḥ / sa tāh
saṃ samah prthivyāṃ pratiṣṭhāpayām āsa samuddharati sma /

7 mṛduṇī cāsya hastā-pāda-talāṇy abhūvan kācilindikāṭireka-sukha-
saṃsparśāṇi / sa tair yān śṛṣṭi śriyaṃ vā puruṣam vā dārakaṃ
vā dārikāṃ vā sarve te priti-manaso ‘bhūvan parama-sukha-
saumanāsya-samarparītāḥ /

8 aśeyā-jaṅghatā cāsya abhinirvṛttābhūt / tasya jaṅge anupūrva-
samudgate abhūtāṃ racite vṛtte sujāte aiṇeyasyeva mrga-rājñāḥ /
naināṃ kaścit samartho ‘nujavitum anuprāptum vā na ca vrajān
klamam āpadyate sma /
9 saptotsadāḥ khalu punaḥ sa tejodhipati-rāja-kumāro 'bhūt / tasya dvayoḥ pādayor dvāv utsađau jāṭav abhūtaṁ vṛttau sujaṭau suparipūrṇāv adṛśya-saṃdhī suracītau daraṇīyau dvau hastayor dvāv amaśa-kūṭayoh prṣṭhato grīvāyam ekaḥ /

10 kośa-gata-basti-guhyatā cāsya mahāpuṣa-laṃśanam abhinirvṛttam abhūt / suguptam asya kośa-basti-guhyam abhūn nimagnaṁ saṃchāḍītam tad yathā hasty ājāneyasya vā asvājāneyasya vā / nāsya kaścit stri vā puruṣo vā dārako vā dārikā vā vrddho vā madhyo vā dāhoro vā guruvā guru-sthāniyo vā nirvasanasyāpy apasyaṇad anyatra svaparibhogena naimittikena vā kāmopacitena /


12 citāntarāṃsaḥ khalu punar abhavat sūpacita-śarīraḥ suvibhakta- samuccraya sarva-saṃsa-bhāga-praṭiṣṭhitah anūna-gātraḥ anunnata-gātro ‘parinat-agātro maṇi-phalaka-visṛṣṭatireka-dyuti-gātraḥ /

13 saṃvṛttāskandhāh khalu punar abhavat / vṛttāvasya skandhāv abhūtaṁ pīnau subhau suparipuṣtau /

14 pralamba-bāhutā mahā-puṣa-laṃśa-pratilabdhaḥ sa khalu punar abhavat / so ‘navanamanonobhāhyām pānibhyām jānu-manḍale parimārjati parāmrśati sama-bhāga-sthitenā śarīreṇa /

15 brhad-rju-gātra-mahāpuṣa-laṃśa-pratilabdhaḥ sa khalu punar abhavat sarvāvaropeta-paramāṇu-sama-gātraḥ praśama-gātro guru-gātraḥ prasanna-gātraḥ prahlāda-gātraḥ /

16 kambu-grīvatā-mahāpuṣa-laṃśa-pratilabdhaḥ sa khalu punar abhavat adīna-kaṇṭhaḥ ca / tasya yāvatyo grīvā-sāmantakena mukha-sāmantakena ca rasa-haranyaḥ tāḥ sarvāḥ samā abhūvan samantāḥ suparipūrṇāḥ /

17 simha-hanutā-mahāpuṣa-laṃśa-pratilabdhaḥ sa khalu punar abhavat suṇispīḍita-hanuḥ suparipūrṇa-mukha-manḍalaḥ sujāta-paṛīṣuddha mukha-manḍalaḥ svāyata-mukha-dvāro ‘pavivaraḥ /

18 sama-catvārimśad dantātā-mahā-puṣa-laṃśa-pratilabdhaḥ sa khalu punar abhūt anūna-daśanaḥ / tasya kiṃcid bhakta-paribhogoṣu ekāvāram api mukha-bhaktaṁ parivartamānam asaṃbhinnam abhyavahāram agamat antaṣa ekodana-bindur api /

19 aviralāviṣama-dantatā-mahāpuṣa-laṃśa-pratilabdhaḥ sa khalu punar abhavat / aviralā aviṣamā asya dantā abhūvan acchidra-saṃdhyaḥ samāḥ suvibhaktāḥ yair asyāhāraṁ paribhūjiṇānasya nabhūt saṅgo vā parisaṅgoparudvaṅgo vā upakledu vā abhiṣyando vā paryavanāḥo vā atisarjanaṁ vā /
20 sama-dantā-mahāpuruṣa-lakṣaṇa-pratilabdhaḥ khalu punar abhavat sama-danto nona-danto nādhika-danto nonnata-danto na saṁnata-danto na saṁbhinnā-dantā samantamadhya-danto 'nusanna-
danto avinirbhinna-dantā / susukla-dāṃṣṭraḥ ca kumāro 'bhūt
 nirupa-keśa-dāṣṭraḥ suprasanna-dāṃṣṭraḥ supariśuddha-dāṃṣṭraḥ
 susamśthita-vicitra-dāṃṣṭraḥ /
21 suprabhūta-jīhvātā-mahāpuruṣa-lakṣaṇa-pratilabdhaḥ khalu punar
 abhavat / prabhūtā cāsya jīhvā abhūt tanvī mṛdvī sukumārā
karmāṇyā kamanīyā laghu-parivartiniśa mukha-manḍala-saṃchādānā
 tathya-paṭyārtha-vyaṅjana-pada-nirukty-adhiśṭhāna-samprayuktā /
22 brahma-svaraś ca sa kumāro 'bhūd abhirucira-svarāḥ sarva-
tūrya-nirnāda-gīta-vādyā-ghoṣa-maṇojīra-ruta-ravītalāpa-saṃlāpa-vāk-
karma-pravvāhāraḥ vāk-pathābhīrati-saṃjananīṁ sarva-
lokābhīnandinīṁ vācam udīrayati sma / brahmātīreṇa svareṇa ca
parśan maṇḍalam ātikrāmati sarvam ca anuravati /
23 abhinīḥa-netraś ca sa kumāro 'bhūd accha-netraḥ pariśuddha-
netraḥ prabhāsvara-netraḥ viprasanna-netraḥ 'bhurūpa-netro darśaniya-
netraḥ surucira-netraḥ prahasita-netraḥ /
24 go-paśmo sa kumāro 'bhūt padma-rāga-suviśuddha-caksūr
āyatanāḥ sama-netra-raṅgāḥ sama-sadrśa-netra-raṅgāḥ sujāta-netra-
raṅgāḥ āyata-netra-raṅgāḥ puripūra-netra-raṅgāḥ supratīṣṭhita-netra-
raṅgāḥ /
25 bhruvo ['ntare cāsya ūṛnāṁ jāṭabhūn mṛdvī karmāṇyā
sukumārākula-saṃsparśā svacchā suddhā prabhāsvarā hima-guḍikā-
tuṣāra-varṇā suṣukla-raśmi-manḍala-prabhāva-bhāsa /
26 mūrdhni ca asyośnīsam abhinirvṛttam abhūt sujātām samanta-
parimāṇḍalaṃ madhyābhīnastaka-keśālaṃkāram koṭī-śata-sahasra-patra-
ratna-padma-saṃdarśitaṃ samantāt-sama-bhāga-pratīṣṭhitam aparimitam
ahārdhyatā-pradhāna-madhyam /
27 sūkṣma-cchaviś ca sa kumāro 'bhūt / nasya kāye rajo vā malo
vā kledo vā jālaṃ vā valī vā saṁhītyaṃ vā bhaṅgo vā prasaraṇaṃ
vā visaraṇaṃ vā asamaṇ vā asthiṣata /
28 suvarṇa-varṇa-cchaviś ca sa kumāro 'bhūj jāmbū-ndaḥ-hema-
nirbhāsaḥ samanta-vyāma-prabhāḥ kāṇcanaika-jvalā-prabhā-
manḍalopaśobhitaḥ sarva-roma-kūpa-pramukta-gandha-raśmi-vitimira-
prabhāsvara-śaṅrīśaṅkāraḥ /
29 ekaika-romaḥ ca sa kumāro 'bhūt / ekaika-romaṣya ekaikasmin
roma-kūpe roma jātaṃ abhūn nīlā-vaidūrya-varṇa-pradakṣiṇāvarta-
kundala-jātaṃ suparasamcitaṃ suniviṣṭaṃ supratīṣṭhitam /
30 ārdhvaṅga-romaḥ ca sa kumāro 'bhūd avinivartaniya-romaḥ
apratyudāvartaniya-romaḥ asaṃṛṣṭa-romaḥ /
31 īdṛṇaīa-varṇa-keśa-mahāpuruṣa-lakṣaṇa-pratilabdhaḥ sa kumāro
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‘bhūt / tasya-nilah keśa abhūvan vairocana-manī-ratna-nilā-varṇa-nirbhāsah snigdhā mrdavaḥ sukunjitāḥ pradaksinā-varta-kuṇḍalināḥ sujāta-nilā anudhataḥ nispiḍitā asamulitāḥ samasadṛśa-sthāna-saṃsthitāḥ /


NOTES

3. Sir Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary (Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), 381. Bharata is the eponymous ancestor of the Indian people and the person after whom the Mahābhārata was named.
5. Sutta 30; PTS 3:143 ff.
6. Sutta 14; PTS 2:16-19
7. Sutta 91; PTS 2:136-137
9. The ‘Great Story,’ a collection of legendary biographical materials on the Buddha produced by the Mahāsāṅghika school, or more precisely, its offshoot, the Lokottaravāda, the ‘Transcendent’ school, of early Buddhism. Date: between the second century B.C.E. and the second century C.E. See Warder, Indian Buddhism, 266 and 318.
10. A Sanskrit Mahāyāna work traditionally attributed to the Indian Buddhist, Asaṅga (3rd century C.E.).
11. A Sanskrit-Tibetan lexicon initiated in the 8th century C.E. by Tibetan king Trisong Detsen to facilitate the translation of Indian Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna texts into Tibetan.
12. An Indian Sanskrit Mahāyāna work of the 3rd century C.E.
traditionally held by Tibetans to have been dictated to Asanga by Maitreya. Chinese tradition attributes it to one Sthiramati. See Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 383 and 386.

13 A Sanskrit Abhidharma compendium, probably of Sautrāntika origin, date unknown.

14 A Sanskrit compilation of Buddhist terms and lists, traditionally attributed to Nagarjuna, date/provenance unknown.

15 The longest sūtra in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* is a collection of materials artistically fashioned into a religious novel narrating the pilgrimage of a young man named Sudhana as he undertakes a pilgrimage in search of enlightenment at the behest of the bodhisattva Maṇjuśrī. The meaning of the title is difficult: Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 402, offers ‘Array of Flowers’ or ‘Bouquet.’ Warder observes: “The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* is a literary masterpiece, the most readable of all the Mahāyāna sūtra and almost the only one organized as a balanced work of art on an effective plan.” Warder further notes that internal evidence in the Sūtra indicates an origin in South India.

16 “The Bodhisattva in his last existence enters into the womb of a woman whose wisdom and intelligence are well known to all; she neglects no duty; she is of perfect lineage and birth. Her figure is perfect, her name is perfect, her proportions are perfect. She has not yet given birth and has perfect morals. Completely self-sacrificing, she is always smiling. Gentle and wise, fearless, experienced, learned, and guileless, she is without artifice, without anger, without jealousy and greed, without frivolity, and without inconstancy. She is not a gossip; she is patient, strong, modest, chaste and emotionally stable. Desire, hatred, and ignorance have little hold upon her, and she is free from all possible faults of the feminine sex. She is strongly devoted to her husband.” *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, trans. Bays, 42.

17 LVS-E, 647-653.

18 The original Sanskrit was lost, except for the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* and Daśabhūmika.


This may be a reference to one of the five trees of paradise. N.H. Samtani, The Arthaviniścaya Sūtra and Its Commentary, Tibetan Sanskrit Words Series Vol. XIII (Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1971), 123. Samtani is commenting on an unknown commentator of the Arthaviniścaya Sūtra.

In his commentary on the 32 marks in Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, trans. M.E. Burnouf (Librairie D’Amérique et D’Orient, 1852; 1973), 575.


Burnouf, Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, 573.

‘Down’ is another laksana – see below.


Arthaviniścaya Sūtra, 124.


Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, 574-5.

Dr. O. Bendz, in a verbal communication.

LXIII (14), 31: zhab kyi rting pa yangs pa, “feet with broad heels.”


Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary, 175

Monier Williams Dictionary, 266.

Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, 572.

LXIII (14), 15.

Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary, 126.

Arthaviniścaya Sūtra, 125.

LXIII (14) 16.

Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, 568

Or ‘not inferior neck’ per Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary, 459.


Ibid., 45.

Ibid.

upa-rudvaṅga, w.r. for upa-ruddhāṅga, per Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit
abhisyanda, “oozing/flowing”, ulceration, per Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, 57.

paravānāha ‘with plaque’? or ‘disease’?

Or excessive emission of food particles; atisarjanam, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, 56.

Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, 565.


Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, 550: mukha-ṃḍala-

saṃchādani.

Literally, ‘truth-path-meaning-sound-complete sentence-explanation-
determination-endowed’ (tathya-pathya-artha-vajayana-pada-nirukti-

adhisthāna-samprayuktā).

Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, 514.

Samtani. 126

Majjhimanikāya sutta 91; PTS 2:136-137.

A 14-word bahuvrhi: sarva-tūrya-nirnāda-gīta-vādyā-ghoṣa-manojña-
ruta-ravita-ālāpa-samlāp-vāk-karma-pravyāhāra. (A bahuvrīḥ is a

Sanskrit compound ending in a noun but acting as an adjective

qualifying another noun (in this case ‘kumaro,’ the prince).

For example, V.S. Agrawala, “The Thirty-Two Marks of the Buddha


Mahāvyutpatti, LXIII(14), 13.

Tony Duff, Illuminator Tibetan English Dictionary, electronic version

(Padma Karpo Translation Committee, 2004), under heading ‘tshangs

pa’i dbyangs’

LXIII (14), 5.

Page 21.

Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, p. 563.

Mahāvyutpatti, LXIII(14), 4.

See under mdzod spu, ‘urna hair,’ translation of the Sanskrit urnakesha.

The urna hair is a small hair between the eyebrows; it is elastic but

coops up into a ringlet on the forehead when left alone.

Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, 558-560.

Mahāvyutpatti, LXIII (14),1: dbu gtsug tor dang ldan pa, ‘having a

crown protuberance.’

W.Y. Evans-Wentz, Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines (London:


The Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen.

asthiṣata = possible w.r. for asthiṣāta?
Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, 574-5.
77 LXIII (14), 17.
78 Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, 571.
79 Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, 562: “C’est au lecteur compétent de décider s’il lui semble que la frisure des cheveux d’un Buddha soit la représentation idéalisée d’une chevelure africaine, ou seulement l’exagération d’une de ces chevelures bouclées commes celle que les poètes aiment à célébrer dans l’Indien Krichna, ou comme celle qui a fait donner au guerrier Arjuna le nom de Guđâkêça, ‘celue don’t les cheveux sont ramassés en boule.’”
80 Mahāyutpatti, LXIII (14), 2.
81 LXIII (14), 20.
83 LXIII (14), 20.
85 See also H. V. Guenther, “Excerpts from the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra”, Tibetan Buddhism in Western Perspective (California: Dharma Publishing, 1977), 3-35 (Editor).

**Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no. 5, ed. Vaidya, P.L. (Mithila Insitute, Darbhanga, 1960), 309-311.**

...
গণ্ডব্যুৎপত্তি

হলায়াদ্যতান্ত্রিকাবৃত্তি সত্ত্বা নিজের কাছে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করা ছিল। তবে পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ যে দর্শন দিয়ে বসে থাকেন তা অনেকের মতামত ছিল যে, পুরুষ 

1 B om. হলায়াদ্যতান্ত্রিকাবৃত্তি।
2 B পরিষ্কার।
The Buddhālakṣaṇa and the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, Levman