

Tuvaṭṭati/tuvaṭṭeti Again

One of the rare *deśī*-words in Pāli, *tuvaṭṭati*,¹ is discussed by W.B. Bollée in his article “Notes on Middle Indo-Aryan Vocabulary II”.² His article follows one by Ludwig Alsdorf,³ who discovered this word in the Aśokan edicts of Dhauli and Jaugada. Previously, the words of the relevant sentence (P/Q) *e kilamte siyāti*⁴ *te<na> ugaca samcalitaviye tuvaṭṭitaviye etaviye vā* at Dhauli had been segmented as *tu vaṭṭitaviye*. However, as L. Alsdorf rightly pointed out, *tu* (“but”) is used only in the Girmār version, while all other versions have *cu*. This, however, raises a semantic problem concerning the newly discovered Aśokan word *tuvaṭṭitaviye*, which Alsdorf discussed at some length, using the evidence found in Jain texts. To this Bollée added the relevant Theravāda references.

In both Buddhist and Jain literature, *tuvaṭṭati/tuvaṭṭeti* and *tuyaṭṭai/tuyaṭṭei* are usually and correctly assumed to mean “to lie down”. There is no etymology, however, to support this. The traditional derivation as given by Jain commentators is a strange, even desperate, attempt to Sanskritize this word as *tvagvartayati* (“das drollige Sanskrit-Äquivalent”),⁵ which seems to be due to purely phonetic considerations (“Lauteschieberei”), but of course, once created, the word almost necessarily developed a semantic life of its own. The second part of the compound must have invited commentators to assume a meaning such as “lying down [and] rolling from one side to the other”.

Unfortunately, the verb *tuvaṭṭitaviye* stands next to *samcalitaviye* in the Aśokan inscriptions. Although Alsdorf also clearly saw that the Jain parallels are not sufficient to establish the exact meaning of *tuvaṭṭitaviye*

¹See von Hinüber, 2001, § 72.

²Bollée, 1983–84, pp. 112 foll.

³Alsdorf, 1968.

⁴On *siyāti* being one word, see von Hinüber, 2001, § 437.

⁵Alsdorf, 1968, p. 18 = 478.

as used by Aśoka,⁶ he nevertheless succumbed to the temptation to follow the Jain “etymology” in part and assumed a meaning such as “sich rühren”, or “be active” as Bollée translated Alsdorf. With commendable caution, W. B. Bollée draws attention to the Pāli evidence not discussed by Alsdorf, pointing out the difficulties rather than giving solutions.

The problem of *tuvaṭṭati*, however, was not put to rest, but taken up again recently in an article by H. Tieken, who reviewed the evidence once more in his study “Middle Indic *tuvaṭṭa-*”.⁷ Tieken is certainly to be commended for assembling all relevant passages from Jain and Buddhist literature and placing them side by side with the Aśokan inscriptions, thus making it easy to view all the material.

Tieken’s argument begins with Aśoka and with Alsdorf’s opinion concerning the meaning of *tuvaṭṭaviye*, to which he adds his own derivation from Sanskrit *ati-vṛt-*, suggesting it means “to move excessively”. According to the Poona Dictionary, however, the meaning of *ati-vṛt* is rather “to go beyond”, etc., as we would expect. The phonetic development postulated by Tieken is not an easy one: “loss of the initial *a-* in *ati-* and labialization of the vowel representing *-ṛ-*”.⁸ The vowel “labialized”, however, is the *-i-* in *ati-*, while *-ṛ-* would develop quite regularly into *-a-* in *(a)tu-va-*.

Without taking into consideration either the semantic or the phonetic difficulties, Tieken tries to read his interpretation into the Jain and Buddhist texts. As is well known from previous discussions, the verb occurs in Jain texts, e.g., in such stock phrases as *parakkamejja vā ciṭṭhejja vā nisīṭhejja vā tuyattejja vā* (“should exert himself, stand, sit, lie down”).⁹ As Tieken noted, this is in stark contrast to the assumed

⁶Alsdorf, 1974, p. 19 = 479.

⁷Tieken, 1996.

⁸Tieken, 1996, p. 17.

⁹It seems to have escaped the attention of scholars that the meaning of *tuyattai* is also confirmed indirectly by the four *iriyāpatha* of the Buddhists: *gamaṇa, ṭhāna, nisajja, seyya* (CPD s.v. *iriyāpatha* 2., e.g., S V 78,3).

meaning of the word in Aśokan inscriptions. He therefore turns to the Theravādins for help.

The word occurs in Vinaya contexts for monks and for nuns. The following is said with reference to monks: ... *na ekamañce tuvaṭṭitabbam na ekattharaṇā tuvaṭṭitabbam ... yo tuvaṭṭeyya, āpatti dukkaṭassa*, (“one should not lie down on one bed, one should not lie down under one cover ... whoever lies down [commits] a *dukkata* offence”).¹⁰ This rule was adapted for nuns and incorporated into the Bhikkhunī-Pātimokkha as Pācittiya XXXI,¹¹ *yā pana bhikkhuniyo dve ekamañce tuvaṭṭeyyūṃ, pācittiyam* (“whatever two nuns lie down on one bed [commit] a Pācittiya offence”).¹² The commentary in the Sutta-vibhaṅga explains this as *ekāya nipannāya aparā nipajjati* (“after one has lain down, another lies down”).¹³ As Bollée points out, this gives a very precise meaning for *tuvaṭṭati* in a relatively early text. Although it is difficult to date older Pāli literature with any precision, the composition of the Bhikkhunī-Pātimokkha can hardly be later than Aśoka, thus pointing to rather early usage for the verb. Later usages in Pāli, such as *sayane ’han tuvaṭṭāmi*,¹⁴ continue the old meaning.

This would stand in the way of Tieken’s understanding *tuvaṭṭati* as any sort of “bodily activity”. Therefore, he has to back up his argument with “the accusation made by outsiders with regard to the laxity of the monks and nuns. On the basis of this passage it may be argued that *tuvaṭṭa-* ‘to show excessive activity’ has actually found its way into the canon as a colloquial expression for having sex.” This argument, however, is categorically ruled out by the Vinaya. For, as explained *in extenso et ad nauseam* in the commentary on Pārājika I,¹⁵ having sex with anybody or anything results in immediate expulsion from the

¹⁰Vin II 124.10–13.

¹¹This rule is discussed in Hüsken, 1997, pp. 194 foll.; cf. Pācittiya XXXII.

¹²Vin IV 289.1** foll.

¹³Vin IV 289.5.

¹⁴Ap I 37.18.

¹⁵Vin III 28.23–40.25.

order. Here, the infraction is only a *dukkāṭa* offence for monks, corresponding as usual to a *pācittiya* for nuns, so that we must follow the commentary in the Suttavibhaṅga, which takes *tuvattēyya* to mean *nipajjati*. Moreover, Pācittiya XXXI for nuns also corresponds to Pācittiya VI for monks: *yo pana bhikkhu mātuḡāmena sahaseyyaṃ kappeyya, pācittiyaṃ* (“Whatever monk should share a bed with a woman [commits] a Pācittiya”).¹⁶ This underlines the fact, if it is necessary to do so, that simply lying down is, as expected, an offence.

Consequently, there is no way to explain away the meaning “to lie down” for *tuvattati*. This obviously leaves us with a problem in the Aśokan inscriptions. There does not seem to be, however, much room or even much need to deviate from the usual meaning of *tuvattati*, which is amply supported by the texts. It should be kept in mind that it was only because the verbs *saṃcalitaviye* and *etaviye* stood next to *tuvattitaviye* that Alsdorf was led to assume a meaning involving movement for *tuvattitaviye* after a rather superficial look at the Jain evidence. The closer examinations made by both Bollée and Ticken show that the fairly rich evidence in Jain and Buddhist literature should not and cannot be overruled by one single passage in an inscription that is still poorly understood despite the effort made and the progress achieved by Alsdorf. He even had to reckon, probably correctly, with mistakes by the engraver in this very passage.

What then is said in the inscriptions at Dhauri and Jaugāḍa in the relevant sentence? It clearly begins with *e kilamṭe siyāti* “who is exhausted ...”. Then it seems to recommend that this exhausted official should do three things described by three *participia necessitatis*, namely *saṃcalitaviye* – *tuvattitaviye* – *etaviye*. Contrary to the discussion so far, only *tuvattitaviye* is clear and comprehensible: An exhausted official was simply given the choice of doing what is quite natural, to take some rest. In a similar situation, even the Buddha said shortly before his death: *kilanto ’smi Cundaka nipajjissāmi* (“I am exhausted, Cundaka, I

¹⁶Vin IV 19,31** foll.

want to lie down”).¹⁷ The exact connotation of *saṃ-cal-* and *saṃ-car-* is not known. In Sanskrit they mean respectively, “to quiver, to move away” and “to meet, to approach, to practise”.¹⁸ Nor is the exact connotation of *etaviye* known. For **etabba* is unattested in canonical Pāli texts, and *etavya* seems to be rare in Sanskrit. In both languages it would be usual to use *gantavya/gantabba*. Thus research somehow seems to have moved in the wrong direction, investigating the obvious and avoiding the obscure.

One thing, however, is made perfectly clear from the way this problem was approached. It is neither wise nor sound methodology to start from an assumed meaning in a single passage in an epigraphic text that is moreover fairly obscure, then try to explain (if not distort) the semantics of words that are well attested in literature.

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¹⁷D II 134,26.

¹⁸See for example Monier-Williams, 1899, s.vv.