

The *Kuvalayamālā*

Andrew Ollett / *Multilingualism and Genre*



Background. This is a selection from *Kuvalayamālā*, a Prakrit romance by the Jain monk Uddyotana. He finished the work in Jalore, Rajasthan, in 778 CE. While the romance, as a genre of storytelling favored by Jain authors, dates back to Pālitā's *Taraṅgavatī* (second century?), Uddyotana's most proximate model was the *Samarādityakathā* of Haribhadra, whom he considered his mentor.

The main storyline of *Kuvalayamālā* revolves around the prince Kuvalayacandra in his attempt to find and marry the titular princess, and characters he meets along the way. In the course of the narrative the past lives of the main characters are revealed, as well as their continued progress toward liberation.

In this selection (pp. 151–152), Kuvalayacandra has just reached Vijayapurī, the city where Kuvalayamālā lives. He has learned that Kuvayalamālā has devised a test for her suitors: outside of the palace, she hung up one *pāda* of a Prakrit *gāthā*. She will marry the man who figures out the rest of the poem. In his search for information about the test, Kuvalayacandra reaches a residential school and encounters some of its students.

Languages. *Kuvalayamālā* is written in Prakrit prose with a liberal sprinkling of *gāthās*, but Uddyotana includes several passages in Sanskrit and Apabhramsha as well one celebrated passage in Paishachi. These are all literary languages, but a few scenes depict spoken languages. In this scene, the students are represented as speaking a kind of language that anyone who has seen schoolchildren trying to speak Sanskrit in India today will instantly recognize: a local language sprinkled with Sanskrit words and expressions in varying

degrees depending on the speaker's facility. Case-endings are usually thrown to the wind. We can call it "schoolhouse Sanskrit."

Precisely which local languages are in the mix here is hard to say, both because many features are (or were) common to the local languages of western North India, and because the students themselves are explicitly said to come from all parts of India. (The school is located in Vijayapurī, which A. N. Upadhye tentatively identified with the coastal town of Vijayadurga in Goa.) Some of the words and expressions resemble Rajasthani to me.

The students also recite verses in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha, although these verses are a jumble of clichés, banalities, and mistakes, and the students invariably fail to identify the meter of each verse correctly.

Significance. It is clear from this scene, as well as others in *Kuvalayamālā*, that the language of narration, Prakrit, is not identical to the spoken language of any particular region. Prakrit is enumerated, along with Sanskrit and Apabhramsha, as one of the three literary languages used in the royal court. Throughout the work, Uddyotana clearly links language, meter, and genre: Sanskrit appears in *ślokas*, Prakrit in *gāthās*, and Apabhramsha in *dobās*. At the same time, there is a sense of continuity both among the three literary languages and between these literary languages and at least some of the spoken languages.

Uddyotana says at the end of *Kuvalayamālā* that you can read the work if you have a certain amount of literary knowledge (incidentally, a qualification for being a well-formed person that is foregrounded

in the story itself). If not, he says, come back to *Kuvalayamālā* after doing your homework. Scenes like this one show what the world of literature—and the languages and genres that populate it—looks like to the uninitiated.

Further reading.

Upadhye, A. N. (ed.) *Kuvalayamālā of Uddyotana Sūri*. Bombay: Bhāratiya Vidyā Bhavana, 1959 (vol. I) and 1970 (vol. II). Singhi

Jain Series 45 and 46.
Chojnacki, Christine. *Kuvalayamālā: Roman jaina de 779 composé par Uddyotanasūri*. Vol. I (*étude*) and Vol. II (*traduction et annotations*). Marburg: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 2008.
Master, Alfred. “Gleanings from the *Kuvalayamālā Kabā* I: Three fragments and specimens of the eighteen Desabhāsās.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13 (1949): 410–415.



te ya tārise dālivatṭa-chatte daṭṭhūṇa ciṃṭiyaṃ, ‘aho, ettha ime para-tatti-tagḡaya-maṇā, tā imāṇaṃ vaaṇāo jāṇihāmi kuvalayamālāe laṃbiyassa pāyayassa paṭṭiṃ.’ allīṇo kumāro.

jaṃpio payatto. ‘re re āroṭṭa, bhaṇa re jāva ṇa pamhusai. janār-dana, pracchahum kattha tubbhe kalla jimiyallayā.’

teṇa bhaṇiyaṃ, ‘sāhiṃ je. te tao tassa valakkhaellayaham kirāḡaham taṇae jimiyallayā.’

teṇa bhaṇiyaṃ, ‘kiṃ sā visesa-mahilā valakkhaielliya?’

teṇa bhaṇiyaṃ, ‘ahahā, sā ya bhaḡāriya saṃpūrṇṇa-svalakkhaṇa gāyatri yadṛsiya.’

aṇṇeṇa bhaṇiyaṃ, ‘varṇṇi kiḡṛsaṃ tatra bhojanaṃ.’

aṇṇeṇa bhaṇiyaṃ, ‘cāibhaṭṭo, mama bhojana sprṣṭam, takṣako ham, na vāsuki.’

aṇṇeṇa bhaṇiyaṃ, ‘kattu ghaḡati taū, haddhaya ullāva, bhojana

When he saw those students, he thought, ‘Ah, these look like the kinds of boys that are always talking about other people’s business. So from what they’re saying I can probably find out what’s going on with the *pāda* that *Kuvalayamālā* hung up.’ He approached them.

The conversation got going. “Hey! Hold on a second! Tell us before we forget about it, Janardan. We were asking where you guys ate yesterday.”

“I was just about to! We ate at that Kirāṭa’s that we met.”

“Did you meet his wife? She’s really something.”

“Hah, yea, she’s a dame. With all the auspicious marks, you know, like Gāyatrī.”

Someone else chimed in. “So tell us, how was the food there?”

“You know, I hardly touched it. I’m Takṣaka, not Vāsuki.”

“Does that even make sense? Is that supposed to be a joke? ‘I

spaṣṭa svanāma simghasi?’

aṅṅeṇa bhaṅṅiyam, ‘are re vaḍḍo mahāmūrkhā, ye pāṭaliputra-
mahānagarāvāstavye te kutthā samāsokti bujjhaṃti.’

aṅṅeṇa bhaṅṅiyam, ‘asmād api iyaṃ mūrkhatarī.’

aṅṅeṇa bhaṅṅiyam, ‘kāiṃ kajju?’

teṇa bhaṅṅiyam, ‘anipuṇa-nipuṇāthokti-pracura.’

teṇa bhaṅṅiyam, ‘mara kāiṃ māṃ mukta, ambo pi vidagdhāḥ
santi.’

aṅṅeṇa bhaṅṅiyam, ‘bhaṭṭo, satyaṃ tvaṃ vidagdhāḥ, kiṃ puṇu
bhojane sprṣṭha nāma¹ kathita?’

teṇa bhaṅṅiyam, ‘are, mahāmūrkhāḥ vāsuker vadana-sahasraṃ
kathayati.’

kumāreṇa ya ciṃṭiyam. ‘aho, asaṃbaddhakkharālāvattaṇaṃ
bāla-desiyāṇaṃ. ahavā ko aṅṅo vāvāro imāṇaṃ para-piṃḍa-
putṭha-dehāṇaṃ vijjā-viṇṇāṇa-ṇāṇa-viṇaya-virahiyāṇaṃ.’

caṭṭa-rasāyaṇaṃ mottūṇaṃ ciṃṭayaṃtassa bhaṅṅiyam aṅṅeṇaṃ
caṭṭeṇaṃ ‘bho bho bhaṭṭaūtā, tumhe ṇa-yāṇaha yo rājakule vṛt-
tāṃta?’

tehiṃ bhaṅṅiyam, ‘bhaṇa, he vyāghrasvāmi, ka vārtā rājakule?’

teṇa bhaṅṅiyam, ‘kuvalayamālāe purisa-dveṣiṇīe pāyao lambitaḥ.’

imaṃ ca soṅṇa apphodiūṇa utṭhio ekko caṭṭo. bhaṅṅiyam ca
ṇeṇaṃ, ‘yadi pāṃḍityena tato māiṃ pariṇetavya kuvalayamāla.’

touched it’ and you drop your name like that?’

“God, you are an enormous idiot. How do the upstanding peo-
ple of Pāṭaliputra understand *samāsokti*?”

“That was even stupider than the last one.”

“What do you mean?”

“You’ve got all these witty sayings which aren’t witty at all.”

“Forget it. Why don’t you leave me alone? Like you’re the only
smart one around here.”

Someone else jumped in. “No, of course you’re smart. But why
did you say your name after saying you only touched the food?”

“Oh my god,” he said. “The idiot was talking about Vāsuki’s
thousand mouths.”

The prince started thinking. ‘Whoa, these kids come from all
over the place, and their talk is all over the place. Really? They eat
on someone else’s dime, and they have no wisdom, knowledge,
sense, or manners? Don’t they have anything better to do?’

Just as he was thinking of leaving Vijayapuri’s brightest behind,
one of the students spoke to him. “Hey, mister! Don’t you know
what’s happening in the palace?”

The rest said, “Tell us, Vyāghrasvāmi. What’s happening in the
palace?”

“That man-hater Kuvalayamālā hung up a *pāda*.”

At this, one of the students got agitated and stood up. “If
knowledge is what it takes,” he said, “then I’m definitely gonna
marry her.”

¹ Reading *nāma* for *māma*, with Chojnacki.

aṅṅeṅa bhaṅṅiyaṅ, ‘are kavaṅu taū pāṅṅḍityu?’

teṅa bhaṅṅiyaṅ, ‘ṣaḍaṅgu veu paḍhami, triguṅa mantra paḍami,
kiṅ na pāṅṅḍityu?’

aṅṅeṅa bhaṅṅiyaṅ, ‘are ṅa maṅtrehiṅ trguṅehiṅ pariṅijjāi. jo
sahiyāū pāe bhiṅḍāi so taṅ pariṅei.’

aṅṅeṅa bhaṅṅiyaṅ, ‘ahaṅ sahiyao jo gvāthī paḍhami.’

tehiṅ bhaṅṅiyaṅ ‘kaīsī re vyāghrasvāmi, gāthā paḥasi tvam.’

teṅa bhaṅṅiyaṅ, ‘ima gvātha:

‘sā te bhavatu supṛitā abudhasya kuto balaṅ
yasya yasya yadā bhūmi sarvvatra madhusūdana.’

taṅ ca soūṅa aṅṅeṅa sakopaṅ bhaṅṅiyaṅ, ‘are are mūrkhā,
skaṅḍha ko’pi gātha bhaṅasi. amha gātha ṅa pucchaha.’

tehiṅ bhaṅṅiyaṅ, ‘tvam paḥa bhaṅṅo yajusvāmi gāthah.’

teṅa bhaṅṅiyaṅ, ‘suṣṭhu paḍhami:

kāim³ kajjiṅ matta gaya godāvāri ṅa muyaṅṅti
‘ko tahu desahu āvatai ko va parāṅai vatta?’

aṅṅeṅa bhaṅṅiyaṅ, ‘are silogo amhe ṅa pucchaha, gvāthī paḥaho.’

Another one said, “Oh yea? What knowledge do you have?”

“I study the six-limbed Veda. I study the triple-quality
mantras. That’s knowledge, isn’t it?”

“Oh, like you’re gonna use your ‘triple-quality mantras’ to
marry her. You know who can solve the puzzle and marry the
girl? A real connoisseur.”

“Hey, I’m a connoisseur. I’ve got a *gvāthī* that I can recite.”

“Well, Vyāghrasvāmi,” they said, “what’s the *gāthā* that you can
recite?”

“Here’s my *gvātha*:

“She should be very pleasing to you.
What power does a man of little learning have?
Whosoever and whensoever this land...
everywhere Madhusūdana.”²

One of the others heard this and got angry. “God you are
stupid,” he said. “You call that a *gātha*? That’s a *skandha*. And
you guys aren’t asking me for a *gātha*?”

“Yajusvāmi,” they said, “please go ahead and recite a *gātha*.”

“Of course. Here it is:

“Why don’t rutting elephants leave the Godāvāri?
Who leaves that country? Who brings back news from it?”⁴

“Hey,” Someone else said, “we weren’t asking for a *silogo*, we’re
asking for a *gvāthī*.”

² As Upadhye notes, this is a hash of several Sanskrit verses, or words that someone might imagine might be in a Sanskrit verse. *Pāda b* is from a verse in the *Pañcatantra*, *pāda c* is a common tag in donative inscriptions, and *pāda d* could have come from one of a million Vaiṣṇava *stotras*. Note also that Yajusvāmi (sic) calls this verse a *skandha*, by which he probably means the mora-counting meter of Prakrit poetry, but it is obviously a Sanskrit *śloka*.

³ Reading *kāim* instead of *āim* with Chojnacki.

⁴ This is an Apabhramsha *dobā*, although it is lacking a rhyme, and it doesn’t seem to make much sense. One of the students mistakenly calls it a *śloka*.

teṇa bhaṇiyam, 'suṭṭhu paḍhami.'
taṃbola-raīya-rāo aharo dṛṣṭvā kāmīni-janassa
amham ciya khubhāi maṇo dāridra-gurū ṇivārei.

tao savvehi vi bhaṇiyam, 'aho bhaṭṭa yajusvāmi, vidagdha-
paṃḍitu vidyāvamto gvāthī paṭhati, etena sā pariṇetavyā.'

aṇṇeṇa bhaṇiyam, 'are, keriso so pāyao jo tīe laṃbio?'

teṇa bhaṇiyam, 'rājāṃgaṇe maiṃ paḍhiu āsi, so me⁶ vismṛtu,
savvu loku paḍhati' tti.

"Fine," he said, "here it is:

"On seeing my lover's lower lip red with betel,
my mind starts to falter, but my poor teacher stops me.⁵

"Well, well," they all said. "The learned and sophisticated Mr.
Yajusvāmi can recite a *gvāthī*. It looks like he'll marry her after
all."

Someone asked, "Hey, what's the *pāda* that she hung up?"

"I read it at the palace," he said, "but I forgot it. Everyone
knows it, anyway."



⁵ This is, finally, a *gāthā*, and it is mostly in Prakrit, although with several "vernacular" touches: the use of nominative for accusative and the use of the Sanskrit forms *dṛṣṭvā* and *dāridra*.

⁶ Reading *me* for *se*, with Chojnacki.