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**Farming Songs from the Poet King:
Translation and Explication of a Sinhala
Janakavi Work**

ALEXANDER MCKINLEY ¹

¹Graduate Program in Religion, Duke University, USA

¹alex.mckinley@gmail.com

Abstract

This article presents a translation of a Sinhala *janakavi* (“folk-poetry”) work called *Lankā Vistaraya*, or “Lanka Description.” An example of agricultural verse, *Lankā Vistaraya* depicted early-modern Sri Lankan farming as a communal event. During planting and harvesting seasons, the large amount of labor necessitated inter-village cooperation, and *Lankā Vistaraya* not only narrated this activity, but was perhaps the type of song sung to welcome visiting workers about to reap rice paddy. To this end, the second half of the poem was organized around a symbol standing for all of Lanka—Samanala Mountain (a.k.a. Adam’s Peak), a pilgrimage site and highpoint in the island’s watershed.

These verses praised the riverine riches flowing off the mountain, touching all quarters of the island. Since the Samanala portion of *Lankā Vistaraya* is extant in two editions, a synoptic translation style is used to present both versions at once, highlighting the fluidity of composition and collectivity of authorship that characterize *janakavi*.

Keywords: Sinhala Literature, folk poetry, agricultural ritual, manuscript culture

Introduction

Sinhala folk poetry (*janakavi*) is occasionally mentioned in passing by English-language scholars of Sinhala literature, yet is rarely subject to rigorous analysis.¹ *Janakavi* is a wide-ranging category that has been used to denote works including village dramas, deity rites, childhood games, and labor-related songs (W. A. de Silva; Disanayaka; Godakumbara 277-311). In the early twentieth century, there was an initiative to collect many such poems in their palm-leaf manuscript (*puskoḷa pot*) versions and compile them into printed books.² The greatest volume of verses were agricultural poems, classified by various subcategories, the most common being *goyam kav* (“paddy poems”), *neḷum kav* (“plucking

¹ Important exceptions are studies on folk drama and deity-rituals (Sarachchandra; Obeyesekere *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*).

² In addition to the two volumes discussed below, there were many other important early-twentieth-century *janakavi* collections (Agampodigē; Deraniyagala; Dharmabandhu; Guṇadās and Appuhāmi; Pragnaloka; Seneviratna).

poems”), *væpurum kav* (“sowing poems”), and *kamat kav* (“threshing poems”).

A composition called *Laṅkā Vistaraya* is one example of *goyam kav*, and pieces of this poem found their way into two printed collections, the first being *Siṃhala Janasammata Kāvya* (hereafter SJK), edited in 1935 by Wilmot Arthur De Silva and Gunapala Malalasekera, both significant figures in the Lankan academy, the former nearing the end of his career as the latter began his. Eleven years later, another famous author and manuscript-collector, V.D. De Lanerolle, published a volume called *Goyam Kav saha Neḷum Kav* (hereafter GKNK), which contained only the second half of the poem that had appeared in SJK.³ De Lanerolle, however, had clearly consulted a different manuscript.

What follows is an analysis of *Laṅkā Vistaraya* and a full translation that combines the two editions. Readers may prefer to look at the total poem before returning to the discussion, which uses parenthetical citations to reference the verse numbers used below. My explication of *Laṅkā Vistaraya* falls into four themes: (1) the origin and authorship of the poem, (2) its information about agrarian lifestyles in early-modern Lanka, (3) its religious ethos and use of the mountain Samanala, and (4) the differences between the manuscript editions and their significance for understanding *janakavi* in general.

³ He also published an earlier *janakavi* collection (Da Lānarōl *Siṃhala Jana Kavi*).

What is *Laṅkā Vistaraya*, and Who is the Poet King?

Very little can be said with certainty about the circumstances under which *Laṅkā Vistaraya* was created. Its name is based on two verses which call it so (71, 73), both in the second half of the poem, and each unique to its respective manuscript. Likewise, the verses that seemingly claim authorship by someone with the title of Kaviraja, or “poet king,” also belong only to the second half of the poem (69, 71, 77), the content of which concerns Samanala Mountain. This immediately raises the question of whether the first half of the poem, from the longer edition in SJK, is actually part of Kaviraja’s *Laṅkā Vistaraya* at all. Perhaps the latter was simply grouped together with other verses by the SJK editors, or by the original manuscript copyist. Indeed, while De Lanerolle labeled the poem as “*Laṅkā Vistarayaya*”⁴ in GKNK, it received a more ambiguous heading in SJK: “*Purāṇa Goyam Kavi*,” or “Ancient Paddy Poetry.” It is possible De Silva and Malalasekera included more than one manuscript under that heading, given that, like De Lanerolle, they were vague about their curation methodology.

De Lanerolle noted in his brief introduction to the GKNK collection, “This book has been edited by me by collecting thousands of verses belonging to the great number of poetry books used among the low-country population in connection with the paddy industry [*goyam karmāntaya*]” (i). De Silva and Malalasekera were slightly more detailed. They claimed all their poetry was collected and published under the auspices of the Royal

⁴ Several manuscripts in the Hugh Nevill collection (Somadasa) were also labeled *Laṅkā Vistara*, but these pertain to different topics like political histories and boundaries; see: Or.6606(146), Or.6607(15), Or.6607(16).

Asiatic Society. They specified that in 1929, a society named *Siṃhala Śāstrīya Sammēlanaya*, or the Sinhala Scholastics Association, copied and sent poetry collected from a number of different regions. Additionally, palm-leaf manuscripts were used from the Colombo Museum and De Silva's private collection.

Confidence that the editors did *not* mix and match manuscripts comes from their shared emphasis that the verses presented were not altered in any way.⁵ It is clear that the editors sometimes failed to comprehend what they discovered. They all referred to *janakavi* poems as being full of error (*varada*), but also seemed open-minded about potential for linguistic discovery. As De Lanerolle wrote, "It appears through observation of recitations that these poems have been underlain with many words not belonging to the ancient or modern Sinhala language. Thus I think these poems will have a use for university students and others doing research regarding the Sinhala language. Because of that, removing the grammatical errors in these poems was not considered" (ii). All the editors expressed preservation motivations, noting that many of the poems in their collections were already moribund, the urban culture of Colombo sprawling outward with ever increasing rapidity in the early-twentieth century.⁶

⁵ "*apīṭa ləbuṇu kav ē lat sē kisit venas nokoṭa mehi yedīmu*" (Da Silva and Malalasēkara v).

⁶ "*gamanāgamanaya pīlibaṇḍa mekala æti vī tibena noyek pahasukam nisā nāgarikayangē hā gamvəssangē sammiśraṇaya perāṭa vaḍā æti vīmen gambada siritvirīt itā śīghra lesa venas vīmaṭa paṭan gena tibē*" (Da Silva and Malalasēkara v).

I therefore operate with the working assumption that the SJK edition represents a “complete”⁷ manuscript of *Laṅkā Vistaraya*, while the GKNK edition is another fragment, perhaps indicating the second part of the poem was copied more frequently due to the popularity of Samanala.⁸ Taking clues from the longer SJK edition, it is possible to conjecture a time-range of composition based on foreign persons mentioned. The poem contained a verse about the Portuguese (59), and one about the Dutch and their Malay conscripts (54), but no mention of the British, suggesting composition between 1640 and 1796. An argument for the earlier part of that range could be based on the fact that the Dutch conquest of Galle is mentioned, and, unlike the Portuguese (*paraṅgi*) being portrayed as absurdly gluttonous for various types of flesh, the poet had no harsh words for Hollanders (*landesi*), seemingly referring to the Dutch commander as a “golden king.” This suggests that recurrent military skirmishes among the highland Kandyan kings, the Dutch, and revolting lowland polities in the eighteenth century had not yet occurred.⁹

The poem likely originated from a village in the hinterlands of Colombo and Galle, the agricultural and plantation-product

⁷ The scare-quotes are left to indicate the fluidity of *janakavi*, where, before the print era, almost no poem could ever be considered complete and closed. They also indicate remaining uncertainty about the original manuscript used for SJK, and whether its scribe had combined various poems into one book before it was found by W.A. de Silva and Malalasekera.

⁸ For a full anthropological and historical analysis of Samanala, also known as Sri Pada or Adam’s Peak, see my forthcoming doctoral dissertation from Duke University entitled “Mountain at a Center of the World.”

⁹ Or, if the poem was composed later, perhaps the poet remained sympathetic to the Dutch for economic reasons, as inland “gardens” (*uyana*), like those of the talipot trees mentioned in *Laṅkā Vistaraya*, were “increasingly...oriented toward the market” (Dewasiri 233).

lifeline of these colonial ports. One verse mentioned the village of Galatara (52), which lies in Sabaragamuwa Province, in the foothills of Samanala, perhaps a reason for Kaviraja's interest in the mountain. As for the poet king himself, there is little by which to identify Kaviraja.¹⁰ That title only appears in part two, but, in the first SJK part, immediately after the Galatara reference, there was mention of a Sinhala surname—"the Galgodapitiya household" (*galē goḍa piṭiye gedara*), which had a garden of talipot trees (53). Kaviraja perhaps hailed from this family and composed *Laṅka Vistaraya* for plantation prosperity, which would explain the many talipot-flower references throughout the poem (30, 50, 52-54, 64-65).¹¹

Of course, regardless of an original Kaviraja, the *janakavi* medium also demands we make room for many poet kings. If the poem was composed in the late-seventeenth century, it would have required multiple generations of copyists for the work to have survived until printed in the twentieth century. This process of transmission was also responsible for the probable evolution of *Laṅkā Vistaraya*, with quatrains added or dropped, and old lines remembered differently by scribes recording personal copies on palm leaves, verses developing variations from region to region.¹²

¹⁰ N.B.M. Seneviratna briefly noted a "Kavirāja Sihāmuṇi" from the sixteenth century as the author of a widely quoted composition on the "river that fell from Samanala mountain," but he provided no further information on his sources (Seneviratna xviii).

¹¹ Praise of talipot trees was also a stylistic convention, as entire poems were devoted to this plant, such as *Talamala Varuṇa*, Or.6611(66). For that manuscript, Hugh Nevill noted: "There is an ancient custom amongst the Sinhalese, that the local poets should compose one or more verses in honour of each talipot palm that flowers" (Somadasa V:70).

¹² This *janakavi* characteristic—minor variations within verses that represent different regional transmissions—has been impressed upon me by all my

Sometimes changes were only one or two syllables, but this could alter meaning significantly.

Thus when we speak of Kaviraja, it is perhaps best to adopt the “corporate authorship” approach advocated by other scholars of performed poetics in South Asia (Novetzke).¹³ This means that each person who participated in the copying, modification, and recitation of *Laṅkā Vistaraya* also became Kaviraja. Considering this poet-king honorific was not unlike the fancy titles bestowed on decorated courtly poets of the classical Sinhala *elū* tradition (Hallisey "Works and Persons in Sinhala Literary Culture" 709), its adoption by farmers working their lands may also have come with a touch of intentional irony. Knee-deep in the mud of flooded fields, paddy pluckers could be poet kings, too, just by singing along (69-70).

The Poetics of Cooperative Farm Life in *Laṅkā Vistaraya*

Though the Kaviraja name did not appear in the first half of the SJK edition, many early verses did reflect on the composition and recitation process of the poem. Several verses overtly stated that poetry was being recited, and that this had some bearing on the labor (2, 5, 7, 9, 22, 56), like reciting while taking a sickle in hand and cutting paddy. At other moments, it was implied that poetry was read or written while at rest, during refreshment breaks in the shade of thatched field huts (3). Other verses confirmed the

teachers of Sinhala poetry, including P.B. Meegaskumbara, Bandara Herath, and W.A. Liyanage.

¹³ Another example of corporate authorship in Sri Lankan literature, also by an unknown author named “Kaviraja,” is *Kōṇēcar Kalvettu*, a Tamil temple history of Koneshwaram that was updated over generations (Kavirājāvarōtayan).

importance of manuscript culture in this setting, noting specifically that books were used (8, 10, 18, 33), with the author admitting at points that his own skills as a poet did not compare to books of his forebears, the complete versions of their verses already lost (32, 34, 35). Meanwhile, another verse admonished, “Recite the poetry from the book / Do not recite in your head” (20), thereby acknowledging the importance of writ, but not to the point of silent reading. These lines were meant to be heard.

Laṅkā Vistaraya portrayed the audience consuming such verses as a collective assembled to share in farm labor and its produce. Inland villages during this period were small hamlets with only a few dozen inhabitants, separated from other settlements by swaths of jungle through which small footpaths or cart-roads were maintained (Dewasiri 25-32). Two quatrains implied some people came to the village from elsewhere (19, 29), while another mentioned penniless people coming to perform unpleasant work, throwing themselves at the headman’s feet to beseech his generosity (67). This same verse also contained the poem’s one significant reference to caste (*jāti*). Its first two lines read, “The *jāti* servants are we indeed, from the beginning having agreed / For cutting paddy, there is not an ease, drenching and soaking displeased.” It is likely that the majority of these workers considered themselves members of the Sinhala farming caste, or *goyigama*. The *goyigama* were the largest caste, but not the ruling class in days of Lankan kings (Dewasiri 185-96). While prominent *goyigama* headman certainly received deference in villages, many *goyigama*, like the poorest ones of this quatrain, may have felt servant-status considering the conditions of their labor.

Yet *jāti* in this verse may also be a possible source of commonality to encourage solidarity. The *goyigama* caste trended toward assimilation, absorbing new members from foreigners who settled in Lanka as paddy farmers (Obeyesekere "The Coming of Brahmin Migrants"). Moreover, the *goyigama* sustained the other *jātis*. These farmers were no doubt aware that they filled the grain-stores of Lanka.¹⁴ In this sense, *jāti* perhaps carried a larger meaning of a nation one could serve.¹⁵ This may be why food was another theme of *Lankā Vistaraya*. Sharing meals among workers, usually hearty rice lunches, reflected the rewards of communal labor (3, 29, 31), and one verse even suggested the poet received food in exchange for recitation (26). All this created a setting for *Lankā Vistaraya* that allows us to imagine the context of its performance, perhaps being an opening song to inaugurate a harvest. Unlike other farming songs such as *neḷum kav*, or plucking poems, which had a wide range of meandering topics to keep minds busy during repetitive tasks, *Lankā Vistaraya* was more structured and reflective on both the farming and poetics at hand.

Lankā Vistaraya thus welcomed people together and invoked the permission of the gods and the audience to commence recitation and work (6, 40). Its poetry was a gift to people (20), verses nourishing homes and teaching children (30). The cooperative aspect of all this was emphasized by word choice. There was

¹⁴ This awareness was also present in the Sinhala caste chronicle *Janavaṃsa*, which said the *goyigama* labored while "taking into consideration that it was a great service in the congenital diseases of hunger, thirst, and the like." (Nevill 76).

¹⁵ Nor would this interpretation be too anachronistic in predating the nation-state, as European incursions from the sixteenth century onward encouraged counter-collective identities in Sinhala literature (Roberts).

frequent use of the pronoun “we” (*api*), as well as the third-person-inclusive verb-ending of “-*mu*,” meaning “let us,” the poet encouraging everyone to pick up their tools together (7, 8, 9, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 63, 68). This language was also characteristic of Buddhist devotional poetry and everyday speech, showing how work and worship could both be cooperative acts (Hallisey "Devotion in the Buddhist Literature"; McKinley).

Agricultural Religiosity in *Lankā Vistaraya*

There were many indications of worshipful practices in *Lankā Vistaraya*. The poem began as almost every Sinhala work did, with acknowledgement of the triple-refuge of Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha (1). It also mentioned a multiplicity of deities, some of which were ubiquitous in agricultural verse, like the sun and moon gods (2, 48), while others were more obscure, like the “drama gods” (*nāḍagam devi*), who the poet invoked to help study the book (10). Thereafter a full pantheon was mentioned in a manner that further supports the idea *Lankā Vistaraya* was a ceremonial opening text. Forgiveness for poetic faults and permission to cut the paddy is sought from deities including Shiva, Brahma, Vishnu, Saman, Kataragama, Vibhishana, and Natha (34-39). The audience was then instructed to take the refuge of the Buddha, worship the deities, and present them with merit. Vishnu, Saman, Kataragama, Pattini, the four Buddhist warrant gods (*varan deviyō*), Natha, and the Sun were then told to take the merit, which would cause other fortunate things to happen (41-48).

If this represents a village ritual in the Lankan low-country, we can imagine there were small altars for the named deities

constructed from palm fronds, oil lamps being placed in each as the corresponding verses were sung out.¹⁶ What would happen after this point in the ritual, however, is unclear from the text. The verses became longer, and more like *neḷum kav*, alternating between quatrains with labor descriptions, wordplay, pleasing alliteration, or political and mythic allusions (49-68). This suggests that work may have commenced as people sang. In further support of this theory is the fact that certain verses were interpolated from other *janakavi* strains, as if the poet fell back upon well-worn rhymes with which people were familiar. In an interesting twist, versions of three verses in the SJK edition with mythic themes—mentioning Uma (Parvati), Ganesh, Sarasvati, and Mt. Meru (55, 56, 58)—also appeared in an entirely different poem found within De Lanerolle’s GKNK, otherwise unrelated to *Laṅkā Vistaraya*.¹⁷ This shows the free circulation of quatrains within *janakavi*, as authors had incentive to reuse verses that audiences liked. If the goal was to encourage an efficient workforce (18), familiarity had purpose.

After the longer verses, the second part of *Laṅkā Vistaraya* began, a distinction I have drawn not only because this section has the other extant GKNK manuscript to complement SJK, but also because the remainder of the poem is singularly focused on one topic—Samanala. In the first part, the name Samanala was not mentioned, though the mountain was alluded to in a verse dedicating merit to Saman (43), and “the rock of Sri Pada” was mentioned in another playful quatrain (64). In part two, however,

¹⁶ Based on village rituals recorded in the twentieth-century (Obeyesekere *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*).

¹⁷ They were in a goddess poem called *Mādēvi Kathāva* in GKNK, vv.755, 752, 745.

Kaviraja announced himself and equated a proper description of Lanka with a description of Samanala (69-73). Perhaps this part of the poem was sung during work. Perhaps it was recited during rest. Perhaps there was a special ritual to Samanala, matching the poem's repeated mentions of water in four directions. In any event, its audience was treated to effulgent descriptions of the mythic Samanala watershed, the mountaintop held as the source of the four major rivers of the island: Mahaweli, Kelani, Walawe, and Kalu, all flowing in different directions.¹⁸

Samanala was therefore an obvious choice for agricultural religiosity. Nineteenth-century observers noted other connections between the mountain and harvest rituals. The Sri Pada footprint was sometimes drawn as an auspicious symbol in the *maṇḍala* upon which grain was heaped before being threshed, and Samanala was mentioned as a measure of abundance in these threshing poems (Bell; Lewis).¹⁹ In fact, Samanala's watershed reputation was as old as the first Pali poem written about the mountain in the thirteenth-century (Vedeha Thera vv.726, 732). It then became a favorite trope of courtly *eḷu* poets and their *sandēśa* (messenger) poems. In the fifteenth-century *Girā Sandeśaya* ("The Parrot's Message"), for example, the poet compared the mountaintop to the tip of Lady Lanka's head, with cascading waters for hair:

¹⁸ This trope is not technically accurate. Although all four of those rivers do begin from the central Lankan highlands, only the Kalu begins from Samanala itself.

¹⁹ Samanala and the footprint were also occasional themes of *neḷum kav* plucking poetry, as in SJK, vv.1887-8.

Through delicate Lady Lanka's Samanoḷa mountain head
woven with opened pleasant jasmine flower garlands
in the manner of plaits of hair, by a hundred visible falls
greatly shining, is Kalu Gaṅga; having entered near, release
the heat of the body. (Prēmaratna v.79)

One version of *Laṅkā Vistaraya* contained a similar metaphor (87), and the mountain comparisons went well beyond hair. Samanala descriptions across the two *Laṅkā Vistarayas* included analogues with elephants (85-86), anthills (93-94), and a city (71, 73-74).

Meanwhile, themes in Kaviraja's verses on Samanala matched other compositions from the Kandyan period. In the 1788 *Kæṭakirili Sandeśaya* ("The Hornbill's Message"), for example, a poet from the village of Dorapanē in Sabaragamuwa included a lengthy description of the mountain. A metaphor appeared that Kaviraja also used (93), regarding the rivers being divine *nāga* serpents bursting forth from their home in the giant anthill that was Samanala:

Loving Sage Lord decided to give the foot
Four divine *nāga* breaking the Himagiri anthill
Coming this direction, happily journeying before
Four rivers issuing from the Himagiri plane²⁰

Likewise, Kaviraja's *Laṅkā Vistaraya* also resonated with river-specific works of *janakavi*. Among the four rivers of Samanala, the longest is the Mahaweli, winding all the way to the northeast

²⁰ *Kæṭakirili Sandeśaya*, v.12. Himagiri was another name for Samanala, likening it to the Himalayas.

coast. This river was essential to Lankan commerce and agriculture, receiving many of its own elegiac poems, most of which began with reference to Samanala as the origin:

Saman Mountain when giving like four refuges
The four Māras burning from the four directions
Four jasmine flowers and incense offered likewise
Four rivers in this way well-made while in this Lanka²¹

These rivers, originating from a summit with a sacred Buddha footprint, spread the dharma all throughout Lanka, extinguishing *maras*, or the four types of attachments that obstruct the path to *nirvana*. This made the mountain important not only for fertile lands, but also the karmic fecundity of the whole population. Samanala's waters touching all directions brought the dispensation of the Buddha with them, and the mountain therefore consecrated the whole island.

Samanala was an ideal sign to be shared among cooperative workers, and highly abbreviated allusions to the mountain's myths suggest the audience already knew them (74-75, 80-82). Pilgrimage was one way in which Lankan polities in the days of jungle foot travel were connected to develop a shared senses of Buddhist identity (Obeyesekere "Popular Religion"). The field workers of Kaviraja's audience may have been from different villages, but if they were all from the Sabaragamuwa region, they were the most likely of Lankan residents to have climbed seasonally to worship the Sri Pada on Samanala. Sharing this

²¹ *Mahavæli Gaṅga Vænīma* Or.6607(24) (Somadasa), also available as Colombo National Museum Library manuscript 82/W15, v.2. Similar Mahaweli compositions abound (Pragnaloka 9).

prominent piece of land in poetic verse created common conceptual ground for workers who sang beside one another in the same plot of paddy mud, drawing attention to their mutual benefit from the alluvial affluence of Samanala, as well as from its salvational wonder, with a footprint to worship that brings one closer to *nirvana* (80). *Laṅkā Vistaraya* facilitated a sense of the familiar among farmers, and imbued their stewardship of the land with larger purpose.

Comparing *Janakavi* Transmissions

The differences between the two editions of *Laṅkā Vistaraya* hold lessons about *janakavi* as a whole. As noted above, the twentieth-century print versions were ultimately the product of many poet kings. *Janakavi* scribes were not pure copyists, but creators, perhaps sometimes unwittingly by misremembering, but also with intention, as the quatrains entirely unique to each edition testify. Tracking these differences can reveal shifting authorial preferences. In the SJK version, for example, the writer included more verses to introduce the Samanala section, specifying that this description of Lanka was originally created as a sermon when the Buddha left the footprint on the summit (75-77). The SJK writer also added verses to link the waters of Samanala all the way up to the cosmic cascades of Mt. Meru, primordially dispersed by God Sakra (88-89). The unique verses of GKNK, on the other hand, were less concerned with buttressing the poem's narrative structure, instead adding to the pool of metaphors used to describe Samanala (94-95, 109).

The reasons for small syllabic differences in verses shared between manuscripts are more ambiguous; some could simply be copyist

mistakes. In other instances, only the first few syllables of each line were similar, but the verse was otherwise entirely reconstructed. Minor differences often resulted in only a rephrasing of the same idea. For example, in a verse that mentioned two former kings of Lanka (83), the GKNK edition named Bhuvanekabahu and Parakramabahu, while the SJK edition just used the name Parakramabahu. As these were the most common monikers of Lankan kings (there were at least seven Bhuvanekabahus and nine Parakramabahus), the difference between the editions revealed only that the historical allusions in *Laṅkā Vistaraya* were not employed as precise records, but rather synecdochical evocations of an entire heritage.²² The following verse (84), however, differed radically between SJK and GKNK, and the SJK writer's preference for greater narrative continuity was again apparent, opting for a verse that seemed to extend the story of the kings, whereas the GKNK writer switched topics again to describe Lanka as a whole. Later, with minor syllabic modifications, the SJK writer was more particular about possible crops at stake, weaving mention of pomegranates and legumes into the description of Samanala's waters (110-111).

In another verse, the SJK writer expanded on the theme of fours (87). Whereas the GKNK writer maintained the topic of four rivers in this quatrain, the SJK writer made a connection to another famous fourfold grouping—the four fruits (*satara pala*), or paths toward *nirvana*: *sōvān*, *sakṛdāgāmi*, *anāgāmi*, and *arhat*. Like the *janakavi* verse cited above that compared the four rivers to refuges that extinguish *maras*, this verse in SJK also associated the

²² The name Bhuvanekabahu served a similar purpose in other texts of the period, “not as an actual king but as a composite figure incorporated into an ancestral myth” (Obeyesekere "Boundary Books and Immigration Myths" 32).

waters of Samanala with the Buddha dharma, which shone from the Sri Pada like the waves of the rivers. Overall, these sorts of variations show the wide reservoir of literary content from which *janakavi* poets were able to draw, meaning songs could be tailored to tastes. Still, continuity in the overall structure the two *Laṅkā Vistarayas* shows some stability within this literary tradition. As works like Kaviraja's were copied, the poetic license of scribes extended only so far. They sought a balance of familiarity and novelty to appeal to farming audiences, enthrusting them to sow, reap, and thresh as one.

A Note on Translation Style

In the translation that follows, the second half is presented so the reader can consult both extant versions of *Laṅkā Vistaraya* at once. Alongside the verse numbers of my translation, the verse numbers from SJK will appear in square [] brackets, and those from GKNK in angle < > brackets. This way, the reader can track which verses are unique to the respective editions, which are identically shared, and which developed variations. In verses where syllabic differences were dramatic and altered meanings significantly, I present two separate quatrains. With minor variations affecting only single words or lines, I divide the editions with forward / slashes.

I have tried to maintain as close a following of the Sinhala as possible, without extensive punctuation additions, while still crafting a readable translation. At times, adhering to original word order creates slightly awkward English phrasings, but if the idea is still clear, I maintain that order. The poem was meant to be read aloud, and doing so often reduces any silent awkwardness of

those verses. Annotations throughout are meant to guide both novice and specialist through technical terms and mythic allusions.²³

Laṅkā Vistaraya

1.

Tuesday, Sunday, paddy cutting
Triple-refuge having recalled, to the fields descending
From every god, permission taking
All along the field, lines forming

2.

On the right, with the cart, poetry filling
On the left side, people finishing
The Sun God protecting us all
From the Moon God, the warrant²⁴ also taking

3.

To the gods giving merit, take down the writing
The *vādan*²⁵ food is here to eat, friend

²³ Regrettably, there is insufficient space to include the original Sinhala, but I will happily e-mail copies of these works to those who inquire. Thanks are due to Stephen C. Berkwitz and the peer-reviewers of the *SLJH* for their feedback on the introduction. Special thanks are also due to Bandara Herath of Cornell University, who first read the GKNK edition of *Laṅkā Vistara* with me, and planted the idea in my head that “Kaviraja” might be an expression of authorial identity. His specific suggestions on this work, and overall tutelage in how to best translate ambiguous *janakavi*, have been invaluable. Responsibility for any infelicities below rests solely with me.

²⁴ *varam*, a common term for permission, granted by the Buddha to the gods, who pass it to beseeching humans.

²⁵ A special term for food given to people who work the fields (Sorata 933).

The food having eaten, recline
Having reclined a bit, to the field descend

4.

For refreshment, drink milk
To all gods, give merit
While doing, place a leaf cluster²⁶
Let us all go to the resting huts

5.

The noble Sage Lord²⁷ having worshipped initially
Two or three times having invoked the gods
Mentally weaving, having versified
Now let us sing, having made the rhythm

6.

In the world, parents and teachers
In truth, all people at this time
Becoming loving toward my words
In truth, everyone give permission

7.

In the manner of a flower bloomed in the lake
As the sound of the group of bees buzzing
Powerfully carrying poetry for recitation
In the field let us cut paddy without loitering

²⁶ Referring to the betel leaves on which offerings to gods or important personages are often placed.

²⁷ *muniñdu*, the most common name for the Buddha in Sinhala poetry.

8.

Having sought and beheld, having versified
Having beseeched benevolence of the gods
The book with the writing pleasantly
having spoken, let us cut, the hand toughened

9.

Having made the rhythm, speaking well
In the former time, at the place here indeed
The mind in focused solitude for this same²⁸
Our headman, let us cut without loitering

10.

This proud poetry book
People with lessons not here
To study this book
Drama gods, come again

11.

In the morning the crowd having come to the field
Discomfort impossible because of reciting poetry
At the beginning of the verse as I spoke
Not like the lady's laugh for this²⁹

12.

Having played as the voice struck
Having harassed, I came to the field

²⁸ i.e., the poet attempts to accurately reproduce the long tradition of these verses.

²⁹ This may mean the poet desired to recite the poem with some gravitas, but, as verses 12 and 14 imply, women in his audience preferred playful verses.

Girls coming to hear the poetry
Let us speak playful poetry well

13.

Let us make merit to see *nirvana*
From sin let us not go to a hell
Like this, means realized, let us speak
Composed paddy poems let us speak

14.

Every one of us increasing in worth
In the mode of joking poetry singing
Without mischief, cutting paddy
Little sister, to you I give my life

15.

Written decorations pleasantly
Having come to cut paddy
If unable to speak to you all
Why did you tell me to speak?

16.

How I've spoken the poetry now,
Hear, becoming greatly happy.
Here is there other poetry?
Behold the grandeur by this poem.

17.

Spoken without ability, two-handed
lies and such mouth-nonsense, do not speak.

Because of this lack, I do not go astray.
To not speak falsely is meritorious.

18.

People are not here correctly.
As they say they are unable, to me occurs
this desire-increasing poetry book.
Listen well to this poetry book.³⁰

19.

Come as the spoken voice struck,
so as to furtively cut paddy.
Distantly they live; not opening the mouth,
come, you, too, to this by cart.

20.

Recite the poetry of the book
Do not recite in your head
Without poetry here to hear
In hand there are no gifts

21.

From the morning we having come
Having descended well to the field quickly
Not roughly, words chattering
Don't tell me the woman's laugh

³⁰ Indicating the poem was meant to encourage people who were reluctant to work.

22.

*Bōga*³¹ paddy cutting in the field.
Ritually listening to poetry
with passionate mind,
not swiftly in this sky field.³²

23.

Paddy from which to take flowers to offer,
wherever it is, do not cut.³³
Many people having united, cut.
Improper ugly words, do not speak.

24.

To go to the west, too, the sun
was unable to finish
at this time, this poetry desired to hear.
Without divergence let us cut, shoulders valorous.

25.

The paddy I am unable to cut
I take the sickle to hand
Unable to speak poetry well
Let us cut paddy, hand having hardened³⁴

³¹ A variety of paddy

³² Seemingly comparing the paddy field to the field of air through which the poetry floats

³³ Instructing not to cut paddy with flower blooms that could be used for religious offerings. This may also indicate such paddy is not ready for harvest; compare with the third line in verse 50.

³⁴ Perhaps a bit of self-deprecation by the poet, whose lines are not good enough to excuse him from farm labor.

26.

For food, rice and fish giving
For drink, water brought, too, giving
Of this book that had been versified
To recite without a single fault

27.

The sun to set, approaching.
There are people who came from afar.
From before, there is our custom.
Courage having taken, let us cut by hand.

28.

Unable to say the hand is in pain
Saying nothing is the custom to cut
There is not a clever person for this now³⁵
Having come in the field, let us cut paddy

29.

To eat well, rice is given
To give, there is betel, taken
To drink water, became mindful
To go to the village, considered

30.

The home nourishing by the speaking of poetry
Without loneliness, come here

³⁵ The poet admonishes people who forgo the custom to not complain of pain during harvest work.

For young little children
to watch, let us cut the talipot

31.

Without abandonment, for this work result
Friendly people to bring together
With fish, rice to eat
Friends gave for the midday rice

32.

For the mind, this poetry is not undesired
For rice, the desire becoming great
In a book there were forty poems
Without the memory of the poetry here

33.

This book that sings play poems,
is it your intention to request?
Do not request this book.
Though harassed, it will not be received.³⁶

34.

Having bowed the head and worshipped the triple-gem,
love increasing, all gods having invoked,
these errors in this poetry I speak,
forgive, all gods today.

³⁶ This may mean the playful quatrains requested earlier are no longer appropriate, as the deity invocation begins next.

35.

The language of former books studying,
having made happy for the poetry I speak,
gods Shiva and Brahma on whatever day,
faults having removed, protect us this day.

36.

Happiness, the dharma heard, famous
Enthusiastically speaking poetry, famous
Vishnu, Saman, Kataragama
Faults having removed, protect us, lord gods

37.

At Kælaṇi City Vehera well
Majestically your command originated
Now these faults of this poetry to remove
Worship the Lord God Vibhisana

38.

Both hands strongly, paddy handfuls
Not having gone far, friends who cut
In the coming eon, the god who will be Buddha
Lord God Natha, bestow, faults having removed³⁷

39.

Each having realized as much
Everybody cutting our paddy

³⁷ Natha is in the Sinhala-deity version of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, also conflated with Maitreya at times (Holt).

Without end, removing faults
All gods, protect us, this day

40.

First, permission from the Sage
Second, permission from all gods
Third, permission from parents and teachers
Today for reciting poetry, permission from the audience

41.

All taking the Sage Lord's refuge
Removing an error, worship the gods
Divine command existing in this whole Lanka
Having worshipped, let all of us here give merit

42.

Yavahan-mistake pitfalls to remove³⁸
Having gathered to always receive wealth
For Tissa Sage Lord to give great *dāna*³⁹
God Vishnu, take the merit

43.

For an unmindful mind to not happen to me
On that mansion mountain summit to reside⁴⁰

³⁸ *yavahan doṣa*, a type of poetic error: “*ya, va, ha, n*: when any of these letters is the final letter of the lines of a stanza it is considered the rule that the penultimate letter also should be the same in all four lines” (Carter 520).

³⁹ i.e., “alms”

⁴⁰ This alludes to Samanala, the mountain discussed in part two of the poem. Saman is the guardian deity who requested the Buddha to leave his footprint on the summit (P. De Silva).

Without limit, beauty to give to us
God Sumana Saman, take the merit

44.

To bring those twelve spread arms into being
Always atop the peacock to reside
Going to the other shore to arrive at nirvana
God Kataragama, take the merit

45.

To be born in a pure-lineage caste
That received wealth to give for the merit
To not see the death of making war
Successful Goddess Pattini, take the merit

46.

To always speak the Dharma Sage virtue
To erect the statue on sides by width and height
Even in an interval, not a single suffering to occur
Four warrant gods, take the merit

47.

To gods living on distant sky planes
To all gods in this lower universe
To all gods of winds and clouds
Lord God Natha, take the merit and proceed

48.

To remove thick darkness from Sri Lanka
To give great *dāna* with the retinue

The region now to become enlightened
Sun God, take the merit and proceed

49.

In the air, King Sakra in the shade resided, sitting in asceticism,
dāna requesting
Plentiful red rice mountain having trampled, pods having ripened,
becoming most heavy
Having cooked the meal, with water having heated, my *dāna*
giving
Having gone and descended in the lake, oh gods protect us so as to
take away poisons

50.

Proceeded in port on the other bank of the river, having offered
with a flower of the talipot tree
On both banks, two women having come and beheld, a miracle
having happened
Except the bloomed flowers, do not pluck the rosewood flowers
without a multitude of petals
Such a miracle we never saw, from the top of the flower, the gold
chain having been woven⁴¹

51.

Black woman's slender waist to attire, having brought the divine
garment to give
Black woman's plait of hair to bind, having brought the mirrors to
give

⁴¹ This miracle is likely the blooming of the talipot, which “throws up immense plumes of flower into the air” (Somadasa V: 70).

Black woman's swan-breasts to bind, gold thread having brought
to give

Black woman, for you to proceed to this shore, caused the *sannasa*
to be written to give⁴²

52.

The letter, too, having written, to the region sent, double-loads
bound, talipot seeds are brought

Having cut ruts, fertilizer having placed, from line to line the
seeds are planted

Talipot branches, *hiri* branches, prince-talipot branches to bring,
made ponds in the garden

Two-hundred-two talipot flowers bloomed in the aforesaid eastern
Galatara garden

53.

Foolery destroyed, fully the Galgodapitiya Household talipot tree
bloomed

To the field having gone, reed nets having extracted, on both
embankments in the light of a torch

⁴² This mention of a *sannasa*, or royal land grant, suggests that verses 51 and 52 represent an act of immigration, and that the talipot seeds which created the Galatara garden were first brought from abroad. Perhaps the poet was recording here in stylized fashion the Indian origins of the Galgodapitiya family ancestors. The verses also present a more localized origin story for talipot trees. Another manuscript claimed God Sakra brought talipot seeds from the Himalayas in order to grow leaves for books to preserve the *dharmā*; see: *Tala Gas Upata*, Or.6615(527). Incidentally, that myth also mentioned Galatara, and provided an etymology of *galē atara*, or “between the rock,” to describe where the seeds first fell. Hugh Nevill noted for that manuscript: “At Galaturē there was a royal talipot garden or grove, down to recent times [c.1880s]” (Somadasa VI: 680).

Cousins having spoken, arms having extended, four talipot-flowers
saw and took

To transfix the cousins, to behold, talipot-flower *yakkas* playing in
the meadow visible⁴³

54.

A great crowd from Colombo having come, the Galle fort captured
The Malays and Hollanders having taken guns, three-hundred
shots fired

The crowd that came from near the gateway, at the border on two
cloth-carpet rows

That golden king from the chariot descended, the talipot flower
having seen with great sweetness

55.

At the great Mount Meru wall, is not the rock of the universe
lofty?

The other mountain peaks are equal to Lady Uma's hair ties.

The manner of the hidden houses at the royal mansion palace,
Can it be compared?—the manner of the pebbled gems glittering.

56.

'I've plucked and cut,' do not say, most greatly I threaten
pleasantly⁴⁴

If speaking cries and chatter, let us speak a very little bit
pleasantly

⁴³ This *yakka* reference may be literal, so that these cousins were entranced by spirits for nabbing talipot flowers at night. Otherwise, *yakkas* as a metaphor may conjure images of ritual *yakka*-dancers moving in torchlight—a scene that could resemble these waving fields of flowers at which the cousins stared.

⁴⁴ i.e., the poet warns people not to claim their work is finished.

Fatigue having released, like sweetness of drinkable honey, let us
speak poetry pleasantly

Although small, stars not having died; the moon from day to day
having died⁴⁵

57.

The manner similar to proud beautifully shining God Sakra
The manner similar to taking six-thousand *chakra* weapons and
binding the world

This day at Pandyan county arriving, the royal jurisdiction toward
the ten directions, too

For the aforesaid service I approached, having taken the *sannas*
grants⁴⁶

58.

Continuously causing refuge, Mahabrahma's faces and Sarasvati
flourishing always

Rutting-elephant Lord Ganesh—on the Prosperity Lord's face,
both friendly eyes pleasant

The book well-known and beauteous having taken, the struck
sound heard pleasant

Continuous refuge and auspicious blessing giving, make the
mouth, Sarasvati

⁴⁵ i.e., stars do not appear to set in the sky, but the moon does. I hypothesize that this compares workers and poets to stars in their multitude and constancy, although small in status, contrasted with the large luminous moon-king, who nevertheless is fleeting. Kings and moons are a common comparison. See verse 79 and my note.

⁴⁶ Another land-grant, this time as a reward for service in South India, invoking old tropes of Lankan ascendancy overseas.

59.

In the earlier time, boarding ships, atop the ocean ambling
Bodies made full, toddy, arrack, chicken and cow meat consuming
Desires fulfilling, spotted iguanas, dogs, and cats consuming
The manner like this, these Portuguese in the pit going to work⁴⁷

60.

Eighty-thousands bundles placing, red-blue robes and jewelry
adorned
Resided in Tusita⁴⁸ existence, the lord god adorned with sixty-four
ornaments
Preached-dharma investigated, full reality received, in the future
becoming Buddha⁴⁹
For the people who heard, nourishing; for this household, the glory
of noble Pattini limitless

61.

Thickly on the embankment, having taken from the home
doorway, planted ginger saplings
Having surrounded that tree, birds attracting, four more trees
went sprouting
In that enclosure, the group of farmers having chatted, a ginger
flower plucked and went
As if spoken without poison, without faults for the farmers, on the
ginger tree the top flower bloomed⁵⁰

⁴⁷ This pit-digging verse was perhaps incorporated from “*pataha*” poetry (Obeyesekere *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini* 338-46).

⁴⁸ The heavenly abode of the gods.

⁴⁹ Pattini, the Sinhala deity version of the Tamil literary heroine Kannaki, became a bodhisattva upon absorption into the Lankan Buddhist pantheon (Obeyesekere *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*).

62.

Blowing winds having experienced, very pleasing, rising heat
unknown

In the manner of ripened gem-rice, bending, the pods ripening
This recognizable red-rice cutting, on the right at the root placing
With beseeching happiness separating, in the south blooming

63.

Flower-decorated hair having bound, waist having fastened, robes
attiring

Breast pure, coming chest luminous, with clothes having covered
gloriously

Yellow pigment having put on, mouth made red, like ironwood
tender-leaves, the lips shine

Having beseeched the gods and descended to the fields, let us
begin having taken sickles

64.

A lake saw I, not a lake like this, like the great Anōtappa Lake
A water saw I, not a water like this, like the great ocean saltwater
A rock saw I, not a rock like this, like the great rock of Siri Pāda
A flower saw I, not a flower like this, like the Mādampē talipot-
flower⁵¹

⁵⁰ This quatrain seems to describe a preternaturally fertile ginger tree, which multiplies by bird manure, and replaces blooms immediately after being plucked without a curse (i.e., spoken poison) for its harvesters.

⁵¹ This verse was seemingly widespread, appearing in generic collections of talipot poetry, where the “talipot of Mādampē” was a trope (Liyanagē 36).

65.

To speak the praise of flowers, having versified, the gods giving
permission to me

In the lake, beautiful golden colorfully, to the four directions,
petals spreading

Just like aqueous water shimmering, talipot-flowers in the wind
shaking

Behold, friend, talipot-flowers bloomed at the soapstone waterfall
in the not-distant place

66.

Like *sampan*, sloops, and ships coming, the manner in which the
millet sprout appears

Like the blue fly-whisk fan shaking, the manner in which the
leaves in the high wind wiggle

Like gold, gems, and pearls being strung, the manner in which the
millet milk boils

Like torch-fire light appearing, the manner in which the Moraṭuva
millet boils

67.

The *jāti* servants are we indeed, from the beginning having agreed
For cutting paddy, there is not an ease, drenching and soaking
displeased

From copper or from silver, there is not a cent to go to the village
in my hand

Having said that there are no coins, you worship the Appuhāmi,⁵²
son

⁵² A title for a village headman.

68.

Step by step, the foundation having placed, from the assembly⁵³
permission received

From silver fashioned, gold having rubbed, coils chopped with the
sickle

In the sapphire-like smoke having placed, in a golden amulet
bound

Four warrant gods, bless! Having said, let us cut paddy with the
sickle⁵⁴

* * * Part Two * * *

69. <930>

Through glory developed from fortune, arrived

Life like the divine mountain, flourished

Like a noble gold bear, flourished

Sri Sinhala Kaviraja, the Sinhala sage

[1681]

Auspicious merit, divine knowledge, glorious comfort came about

Life, in the manner of divine fortune, augmented

Sri Lankāpura in the whole world shining

Sri Sinhala Kaviraja brought about the Sinhala

⁵³ *sabhāva*. Possibly referring to an assembly of gods, but *sabhāva* is also a common term for a village council.

⁵⁴ This quatrain suggests there was some ritual action at hand, with mention of a gold and silver sickle, and items laid in smoke. The phrase “step to step” is similarly suggestive, as “steps” were central to other types of low-country village ritual (Kapferer).

70. <931>

As those who received any wealth
Like stone walls without any fault
Will an auditorium sweet to the mind be given?
Is there anyone like our *eḷu* poet?
[1682]

As those who give any wealth
Like stone walls without any fault
Are there teachers of our correct *eḷu*?
Will the beautiful auditorium be given sweet?

71. <932>

Description of that Samaṇola city⁵⁵ from long before
Faultlessly points of right quality
I will tell you if you ask to make my mind happy
Laṅkā Vistaraya, lines bound by Kaviraja

72. <933> / [1683]

The merit and sin done by beings showing various forms
Gods and Brahmas who offered *pūjā*, having existed fighting
The sacred foot exists nobly shining like the ocean / A Sage-shone
sacred foot mark establishing
If you sing the beauty of Samaṇola this way / If you sing equal to
Samaṇala this way

⁵⁵ Referring to Samanala as a city (*pura*) also occurs in verses 73 and 74. Because the mountain was described as a physical embodiment of the Buddha's refuge via his footprint, comparison was perhaps being drawn with references to *nirvana* as a city in Buddhist texts (Hallisey "*Nibbānasutta*").

73. [1684]

In the age of the Sugata Lord, that city's description
Faultless footmark, too, placed firm
To speak and smile majestically continuously
Speak, having bound the lines of *Laṅkā Vistaraya*

74. <935>

Worship the city; the Thera Lord was aware,
Now doing what he told to the god⁵⁶
The place where the Sage Lord first placed the foot
Happily without experiencing a line of curse verse

75. [1685]

Lord God Sakra, with *suras*, *brahmas*, and *devas*
Having blessed this world, began giving comforts
Causing the description to be made with majestic power
Having gone to the mountaintop, that Sage Lord entered

76. <936> / [1686]

Thunder King and Mountain King⁵⁷ happily existed from before
Serpent Lord jumping as though on a journey⁵⁸
As though the Lord God gave wisdom
Listen to these verses preached by the Thera Lord

77. [1687]

For the rivers, a binding of poetic dancing lines
At the merit ocean, a floral rain

⁵⁶ i.e., the Buddha's acceptance of Saman's invitation to leave the footprint.

⁵⁷ Perhaps epithets for Samanala.

⁵⁸ Perhaps a reference to Samanala's rivers.

The various positions of a Thera Lord to experience
For Lanka, Kaviraja is a pundit

78. <937>

Sri Lanka from among five hundred names
With great courage, as in the mode of a climbing journey
There were nine full oceans beautiful
Knowing to say the description of Sri Lanka

79. <938>

As the beautiful moon who makes Lanka Island shine⁵⁹
The living poet knows verses to give thanks
For our Buddha who preached the explanatory sermon
Confirmed definitely by the poetic line

80. <939> / [1688]

If you come, we tell you a sign
From path to path, we mark flowers one and two / we offer flowers
one and two
Let us receive wishes from the offered flowers
Having offered those flowers and gone, let us live in relief / let us
arrive at *nirvana*⁶⁰

⁵⁹ This lunar allusion could also refer to a well-versed king, compared to moons making Lanka shine or raising tides of prosperity. Thanks to Bandara Herath for this point.

⁶⁰ This quatrain and the next are extremely abbreviated allusions. They refer to the popular myth that the path to Samanala was first revealed to a Lankan king by goddesses who were caught plucking flowers from his garden to offer to the Sri Pada. They then dropped the flowers along the way so others could worship.

81. <940> / [1692]

Eight handfuls of fragrant jasmine flowers were created / waved
Excellently the seven queens created / praised
Put on fine smooth garments and praised / danced
From that point on the name Samaṇola / Samanaḷa was given

82. [1689]

On the day it was established on the summit plane with power
On the plane of the universe by the gods' power
In this Lanka by the Thera Lord's power
This poetry done by the Thera Lord's power

83. <934>

The king named Parakumba,
from among kings who lived ago,
and the king named Buvanekaba, I say,
were two thera lords who knew good words of seven languages.

[1690]

The kings named Parakumba,
from among kings who lived ago happily,
those two meritorious virtuous thera lords
resided in that city having known good words of seven languages.

84. <941>

Fifty-thousand villages bound and tilled
Having crowned villages of ten-thousand homes
Because of faultless Pattini's action
Poems composed for famous Lankā

[1691]

Having experienced, when the thera lord resided in the village,
the lord king realized those causes.

At the point when the Sage Lord first impressed the foot,
the Thera Lord bound *rasa*⁶¹ poetry happily⁶²

85. <942>

Bees having seen cheek-dew drops, the elephant trumpeting
Bees with divine eye; the great tusk extensive

Bright luminous ivory beauteous

Like the intoxicated bee, as though coming to the fragrance

[1693]

Gem-wall dew drops having seen, the elephant trumpeting

Hesitations of the tongue having broken, the great tusk extensive

Bright luminous ivory beauteous

As though coming to the fragrance, the bee-swarm sea⁶³

86. <943>

Waves, waves, stone waves of various shapes visible

Thick tusks pleasing the mind, the ivory having gone and come

Shining shimmering gems visible, as the mind desires

⁶¹ Literally meaning flavorful or juicy, *rasa* was also a theory on poetic expression of emotion with a long history in India and Lanka. The Sinhala commentarial tradition also included a work on *rasa* theory (Pollock 178-91).

⁶² The SJK quatrain continued the story of kings from verse 83, but a slippery signifier makes the action difficult to parse. The poet seemingly used the name Thera Lord (*teriñdu*) to refer both to the Buddha and to the kings, fitting with the close associations of the bodhisattva cult and Lankan throne. I have capitalized the name when I think it refers to the Buddha and left it lowercase when it seems to refer to kings. Verse 84 thus implies that a king, in a prior birth as a villager, was present on the day the Buddha imprinted his foot on Samanala, and so recorded poetry. The other reading would be for the Buddha to have composed the poetry himself as he planted the footprint.

⁶³ Bees are drawn to the elephant's shimmering rut-fluid on its temple, much to its trumpeting, literally "thundering" (*gugurā*), chagrin. In turn, people on pilgrimage to the gem-studded stormy Samanala Mountain are like that insect swarm.

As though coming playing, like rainclouds went⁶⁴

[1694]

How many waves upon waves, visible as though gold
Thick tusks, scanty tusks, the ivory slowly
Shining shimmering so as to match the mind's desire
As though coming playing, as though pillars went

87. <944>

Sri Lanka like the moon eye, always young
All the fortune of the summit will shine always
Beauty of the four spread like curly hair
From the sacred foot, the four rivers of four directions

[1695]

The sacred foot of Samanala by invocation, the wilderness
on every mountain summit shining amidst.
Always pure, all of the tough fourfold fruits,
the Sacred foot becoming visible, in four directions spread.

88. [1696]

Taking four mountains into a hand
Covering, placed the water body on the earth
Proceeding, God Sakra to the Meru mountaintop
Worshipping, told the Sage Lord to come and sit

89. [1697]

Power I project, my majestic command on this day
The water having parted, to four lands fell

⁶⁴ A four-way metaphor, comparing waves, mountains, elephants, and rainclouds.

Power made millions of waters
Water of four directions, the four rivers made

90. <945> / [1699]

Lines and lines of elephants and horses having leapt
Having come playing, in the midst of that as a group/body
Living in the forest from time to time
By the wealth of Samaṇola there are four rivers

91. <946> / [1700]

Like milk/this, the river water does not exist specially
The happiness of becoming a poet of distinction
Like the star cluster rays in the sky having bloomed / shining
Greatly visible, the river gems like a circle / four rivers like a circle

92. <947>

The island has seven-hundred-fifty leagues
The Sage who bestows *moksha*, with divine eyes perceiving
The place where the Sage who saw special abilities went for
asceticism
Saying more to know the description of the four rivers

93. <948> / [1698]

Samaṇola, an anthill made of gold
As though serpents in the forest going in four directions
Running on the summit, the four from four hoods
All the valuable four rivers are like this

94. <949>

In the known forest the eggs protected well
As though the female serpent having gone out

Taking out the small babies beautifully
As though having gone, the river water is like this

95. <950>

Having danced while holding a sword of diamond
Beauties like those given to others
As though hidden in the water
The teacher who says the name of the four rivers

96. <951>

Gods coming from afar influencing
Door having opened immediately four times
Having fulfilled this, saying to go westward
Knowing the name of the river that goes to the door of the sun
[1702]

From afar those gods influencing
Door having opened immediately through four waters
Having fulfilled this, saying to go to the mountain
The door opened and gone, the four rivers instantly

97. <952>

Dwelling in an auspicious noble palace in Mecca
With Manimekala, having seen with divine eye,
Releasing the waterbody bound in a rock monastery
Wheel of command likened to god Sakra
[1701]

To Mecca having proceeded and placed the two left footprints
With Manimekala, having seen with divine eye,
Wheel of command likened to god Sakra

Releasing the four waterbodies in a rock monastery⁶⁵

98. <953>

When having come from that difficult wilderness, it is beautiful
Bushes threshed, the water body that comes is ocean shaped
The path flowing with various crushed stone mountain
Through the eastern direction, the Walawē river falls
[1703]

When having come from that difficult wilderness, it is beautiful
Bushes shaken, the coming waters fourfold
Various large mountains and hills passing on the road
To the eastern direction, the Walawē river fell

99. <954> / [1704]

Powerfully gone breaking the beauty of leaves and trees
/ Gone until driven off, leaves on trees smashing breaking
Having calmed, the great body of water emerged
Having soothed, removes heat, pleasing the mind
The good river named Walawē is good

100. <955> / [1705]

The mountain summit forest made like the Himalayas
/ The plane of the mountain summit forest like the Himalayas
Having shaken, branches/trees breaking and falling

⁶⁵ Unique for linking the seafaring goddess Manimekala to Samanala's rivers, and also to Mecca, where it was said a complementary Buddha footprint existed. This Mecca myth arose in Sinhala literature in the Kandyan period, perhaps a rejoinder to Muslims who also worshipped the footprint on Samanala as that of Adam (Obeyesekere *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini* 307-08). For a full analysis of the Buddhist Mecca myth, see my forthcoming dissertation, "Mountain at a Center of the World."

In the manner of driving out nine gems from the water
The Walawē river goes with the hue of rainbows

101. <956>

Fertile ground made as though it became bluish
Like snakes emerging interestedly
Emerged reflecting the belly of the sky
As though blue, the Kaḷu river went like this

[1706]

Sri Lankan surface made with these blue waters
Like snakes that emerged interestedly
Emerged reflecting the sky's star cluster
This blue Kalu river went like this

102. <957>

Lines and lines of great rainclouds are elephants in description
Waves and waves like the great ocean's waves
The body of water issuing from the Kaḷu river became full
The whole great Kaḷu river fell through the south

[1707]

Lines and lines of great rainclouds are elephants in description
Waves and waves, the great ocean going on the earth
Groups of water emerged in the waterbody description
The whole great Kaḷu river fell through the south

103. <958> / [1708]

The Kaḷu river enfolding stone mountains in four / Roughly
between stone mountains fell
Like flames, gem rays visible in that forest
Wealth shining like flames dancing
The good Kaḷu river went and fell through /to the south

104. <959>

Body of water having run from the good summit of the mountain
Like the beautiful waves and waves of the full ocean
For the world-ruling Sage Lord, having consumed and filled itself
From which lake, the Kælaṅi river filled with beauty
[1709]

Having run, the water body in the four directions full
Beautiful water wave rows without a break full
For the world-ruling Sage Lord himself full
Struck lightning, the Kælaṅi river's beauty

105. <960> / [1710]

From that Saman mountain summit forest
Beautifully, like the thunder lord going
As though bringing oblation for the Sage Lord / To the Sage Lord
having offered the gem throne
In this way goes the Kælaṅi river

106. <961> / [1711]

Shining, the way gems and pearls appear
Having appeared/Having fallen like gold in this mode
Having descended, canals and creeks as though thundering
In the direction of the west, the Kælaṅi river going

107. <962>

Also brooks and creeks of youthful quality comprised
Without it being dawn, visible there like that
Boats and barges that go and come by the full river
Through the western direction, the river that bears the name
Kælaṅi
[1712]

Also brooks and creeks of youthful quality comprised
At dawn, the vision shown from the water
As though filled by going and coming boats
Through the western direction turned, the river named Kælaṇi

108. <963>

Noble path made of water becoming rough
Visible as though like pure pleasantness
Streams and creeks disappeared, having approached near
The Mahavili river that brings about the mind's desire
[1713]
Places made full of liquid and water waves
The pure current brightly shone
All waterfalls and streams full, the coming water collection
The Mahavæli river that brings about the mind's desire

109. <964>

The sand plane like the full moon having risen
This like beautiful pearl rays shimmering
Gentle wind in the breeze coming coolly
The Māvili river that brings about mental happiness

110. <965>

The waters descending from the great falls and streams
That increasing happiness, blooming lotus flowers
Waters descending, how they're spreading
The Māvili river issued in the direction of the north
[1714]
Hard water coming from the great falls and streams
That developing desire, bloomed lotus flowers

Bāloli plants⁶⁶ nourishing, the field wealth full
The Māvæli river issued in the direction of the north

111. <966>

Descending like the virile tusker chief elephant
Sound-giving stream having broken with waves of water
Became bright, the shining nine gems in the line
Like having made a good lake, too, in that way
[1715]

Then the good elephant lord descended in desire, the stream great
The giving gods having broken desire, the tusk waters great
Just like colorfully shining gems and pearls
Existing like that, good ripened pomegranate

112. <967>

Having sprinkled, the bed of gems and flowers spreading
Having sprinkled, Samaṇola, too, wishing for victory
Having triumphed, visible gems having filled the ocean
The four rivers having waved and gone
[1716]

Having sprinkled amidst the divine flower bed
Having placed the sacred foot on that Samanala mountain
Victory having received, ocean shining, gem sea
The four rivers having waved and gone

113. <968> / [1717]

Having climbed like elephants to the mountain summit
From the summit of that enormous Saman mountain

⁶⁶ a type of flowering legume, *Tadehagi triquetrum*.

Having gone, the river will not fall into a river / A river does not
fall to an earthly river
All four rivers fell to the sea

114. [1718]

Rained, a nine-gem rain around Lanka
In the port, village-land field wealth having made great
On the crown, on that Saman mountaintop resided
All four rivers fell to the sea

115. <969>

The glittering expansive Mahavili river fell
And the Kæḷaṇi river and Kaḷu river fell
Like this, this beautiful Walawē river fell
Like this, these four rivers fell to the sea
[1719]

The glittering four, the Mahavæli river fell.
The Kæḷaṇi river went, the Kaḷu river fell
third, and that Walawe river went south.
Shining, these four rivers fell to the sea.

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