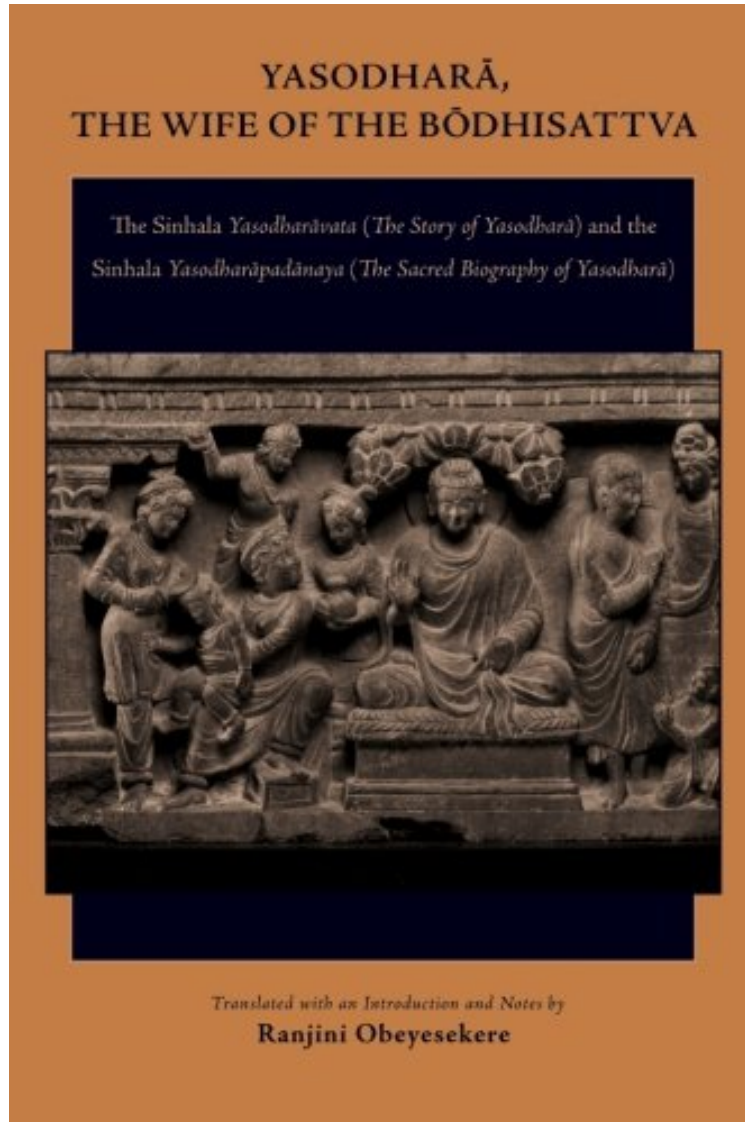


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Yasodhara, the Wife of the Bodhisattva: The Sinhala Yasodharavata (The Story of Yasodhara) and the Sinhala Yasodharapadanaya (The Sacred Biography of Yasodhara)

Ranjini Obeyesekere

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Sinhala Yasodharavata (The Story of Yasodhara) and the Sinhala Yasodharapadanaya (The Sacred Biography of Yasodhara):

Translations of two works from Sri Lanka on Yasodhar, the wife of the Buddha an allusive and intriguing figure in Buddhist lore and literature. What about Buddha's wife? We all know that Prince Siddhartha left his wife and infant son to begin his journey to enlightenment. The Pali canon does not mention the woman he left behind. Yasodhar enters the commentarial tradition around the first century CE and lives on in the folk tradition, growing from a shadowy figure to a nun and arahat (an Enlightened One), even gaining magical powers. In this book, Ranjini Obeyesekere offers a translation of two works from Sri Lanka on this intriguing figure. The Yasodharavata (The Story of Yasodhar) is a folk poem, whose best-known verses are Yasodhar's lament over the departure of her husband. The Yasodharapadanaya (The Sacred Biography of Yasodhar) is an account of Yasodhar as a nun capable of miracles, who has traveled through *samsara* with the Bodhisattva, and who is praised by him. Obeyesekere places these works within their historical and literary context and provides a glossary of Buddhist terms. A challenging and eye-opening read, and the retelling and sharing of Yasodhar's story is the most fundamental type of feminist act. Feminist Review The translations are fluid, appealing, and quite readable. This book illuminates the shadows that obscured Yasodhar from the modernist, essentialized telling of the Buddha story, thereby enriching the growing genre of narratives of women in Buddhism. Donald K. Swearer, author of *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* In her beautiful translation, Obeyesekere provides access to a world of Buddhism that has only been available to Sinhala readers. Many people will now be able to read, enjoy, and study these stories as an important aspect of what can be called devotional Buddhism. George D. Bond, author of *Buddhism at Work: Community Development, Social Empowerment and the Sarvodaya Movement*

a challenging and eye-opening read, and the retelling and sharing of Yasodhar's story is the most fundamental type of feminist act. Feminist Obeyesekere gives us a masterful translation [and] surveys the literary tradition that gave Yasodhara life and also discusses contemporary readings of the story. *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly* The translations are fluid, appealing, and quite readable. This book illuminates the shadows that obscured Yasodhar from the modernist, essentialized telling of the Buddha story, thereby enriching the growing genre of narratives of women in Buddhism. Donald K. Swearer, author of *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* In her beautiful translation, Obeyesekere provides access to a world of Buddhism that has only been available to Sinhala readers. Many people will now be able to read, enjoy, and study these stories as an important aspect of what can be called devotional Buddhism. George D. Bond, author of *Buddhism at Work: Community Development, Social Empowerment and the Sarvodaya Movement* "... a challenging and eye-opening read, and the retelling and sharing of Yasodhar's story is the most fundamental type of feminist act." -- Feminist "Obeyesekere gives us a masterful translation ... [and] surveys the literary tradition that gave Yasodhara life and also discusses contemporary readings of the story." -- *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly* "The translations are fluid, appealing, and quite readable. This book illuminates the 'shadows' that obscured Yasodhar from the modernist, essentialized telling of the Buddha story, thereby enriching the growing genre of narratives of women in Buddhism." -- Donald K. Swearer, author of *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* "In her beautiful translation, Obeyesekere provides access to a world of Buddhism that has only been available to Sinhala readers. Many people will now be able to read, enjoy, and study these stories as an important aspect of what can be called 'devotional Buddhism.'" -- George D. Bond, author of *Buddhism at Work: Community Development, Social Empowerment and the Sarvodaya Movement* From the Back Cover What about Buddha's wife? We all know that Prince Siddhartha left his wife and infant son to begin his journey to enlightenment. The Pali canon does not mention the woman he left behind. Yasodhara enters the commentarial tradition around the first century CE and lives on in the folk tradition, growing from a shadowy figure to a nun and arahat (an Enlightened One), even gaining magical powers. In this book, Ranjini Obeyesekere offers a translation of two works from Sri Lanka on this intriguing figure. The Yasodharavata (The Story of Yasodhara) is a folk poem, whose best-known verses are Yasodhara's lament over the departure of her husband. The Yasodharapadanaya (The Sacred Biography of Yasodhara) is an account of Yasodhara as a nun capable of miracles, who has traveled through *samsara* with the Bodhisattva, and who is praised by him. Obeyesekere places these works within their historical and literary context and provides a glossary of Buddhist terms. "The translations are fluid, appealing, and quite readable. This book illuminates the 'shadows' that obscured Yasodhara from the modernist, essentialized telling of the Buddha story, thereby enriching the growing genre of narratives of women in Buddhism." -- Donald K. Swearer, author of *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* "In her beautiful translation, Obeyesekere provides access to a world of Buddhism that has only been available to Sinhala readers. Many people will now be able to read, enjoy, and study these stories as an important aspect of what can be called 'devotional Buddhism.'" -- George D. Bond, author of *Buddhism at Work: Community Development, Social Empowerment and the Sarvodaya Movement* About the Author Ranjini Obeyesekere is an independent scholar and retired Lecturer of Anthropology at Princeton University. She is the author, editor, and

translator of several books, including *Portraits of Buddhist Women: Stories from the Saddharmaratnavaliya* and *Jewels of the Doctrine: Stories of the Saddharmaratnavaliya*, both also published by SUNY Press.