

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
JONATHAN S. WALTERS,
WHITMAN COLLEGE, 2017

Tambapupphiya

Jonathan S. Walters

Copyright © 2026 Jonathan S. Walters.

PUBLISHED BY JONATHAN S. WALTERS AND WHITMAN COLLEGE

<https://apadanatranslation.com>

Licensed under the Attribution, Non-Commercial, Share Alike (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>).

Printed September 2026

[152. Tambapupphiya¹]

Employed in others' transport work,
I committed a crime² [back then].
I was exiled to the forest;
filled with fear, I was terrified. (1) [1999]

Having seen a tree in flower
with tiny, well-fashioned clusters,
picking a copper-colored bloom,
I scattered [it] on the Bodhi. (2) [2000]

Having swept around that Bodhi,
the ultimate *pāṭali* tree,
getting into lotus posture,³
I stayed at the Bodhi [tree]'s roots. (3) [2001]

Searching for the road [I'd] gone on,
they⁴ [then] came into my presence.
And having seen them, [then and] there
I recalled the superb Bodhi. (4) [2002]⁵

Having worshipped the Bodhi [tree]
with a mind that was very clear,
I obtained varied *tal*⁶ trees [then]
inside a frightful mountain crag. (5) [2003]

In the ninety-one aeons since
I offered that flower [to him],
I've come to know no bad rebirth:
that's the fruit of Buddha-*pūjā*. (6) [2004]

In the thirtieth aeon hence

¹"Copper-Colored Flower-er"

²*aparādham akās' ahaṇ*; given the context, he might have stolen the cargo he was employed to transport for others

³lit "crouching with his legs crossed"

⁴*te*, lit., "they". The text does not specify to whom this pronoun refers, but context would imply that "they" were the authorities or the aggrieved party whose arrival represented danger from which the protagonist required the protection afforded by remembering the Bodhi tree (which in turn presumably succeeded in protecting him when "they" arrived in his presence). I follow BJTS Sinhala gloss in this translation.

⁵BJTS text reads [2022], an obvious typographical error

⁶*tālisa* = talipot palm (Sinhala *tal*) which provides rope, flour, wood, sugar, and an edible fruit. It also grows very tall, which seems to be the virtue understood by BJTS Sinhala gloss given its parenthetical addition that the crag was very deep.

there was a king, Samphusita,⁷
a wheel-turner with great power,
possessor of the seven gems. (7) [2005]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (8) [2006]

Thus indeed Venerable Tambapupphiya Thera spoke these verses.

The legend of Tambapupphiya Thera is finished.

⁷“With Raindrops”