

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
JONATHAN S. WALTERS,
WHITMAN COLLEGE, 2017

Potthadāyaka

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

[276. Potthadāyaka¹]

I gave a plastering² gift for
the Gift-Worthy, Unexcelled One³
in the name of⁴ the Great Sage, the
Teacher, and the Teaching, and monks.⁵ (1) [2605]

In the ninety-one aeons since
I did that [good] karma back then,
I've come to know no bad rebirth:
that's the fruit of a plaster-gift. (2) [2606]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (3) [2607]

Thus indeed Venerable Potthadāyaka Thera spoke these verses.

The legend of Potthadāyaka Thera is finished.

¹“Plastering Donor” (or perhaps to be read, “Bark-Donor,” see next note)

²*potthadāna*. The basic meaning of *pottha* is plaster, a mortar made with limestone, soil, cow dung and water (RD, s.v.). The poem gives no contextual reason to take it, as apparently do both BJTS gloss and cty (p. 471), as *potthaka*, “fibrous cloth” (cp. Sinh. *potta*, bark, which seems to be in the mind of cty when it explains: “it means that a cloak was given by me to the Triple Gem after pounding a strip of *pottha*, dampened *pottha*; rubbing it with a cow’s jawbone [until it is] the same [thickness] as a prepared cloak; taking measured threads; cutting them; [then] having a cloak woven with that thread for the sake of sitting upon or for the sake of carpeting.” BJTS glosses the term as *mā visin niyanda vataḥ dena ladi*, “a hempen cloth was given by me.” Given the association of *Apadāna* with the emergent *stupa* cult, however, the audience would easily have imagined the pious gift to have been a contribution of plaster, or participation in the actual work of plastering, rather than a gift of bark. On the other hand, in typical fashion, the name is reworked for the sake of meter as *Potthaka*, in the colophonic summary, which might support reading it as “cloth” after all. Cf. below, v. 176 of *Pilindavacchcha-apadāna* (#388 {391}) = [3550], where the term is definitely used for a type of cloth.

³*dakkhiṇeyye anuttare*, following BJTS Sinhala gloss (*kerehi*) in reading these locatives as indicating that the gift was “for” the Buddha. But these epithets could equally well stand in for the gift-worthy, unexcelled *stupa* of a Buddha, which is often represented in *Apadāna* as the Buddha himself, and would make sense of the gift of plaster, if that is the meaning of *pottha*. If the reference is to the living Buddha (as BJTS seems to assume), then plastering does not make sense, which may explain why BJTS (and cty) read it as a cloth instead.

⁴more lit., “with reference to,” “concerning,” *ārabbha*

⁵*satthā* (= *Buddha*), *dhamma* and *saṅgha*, i.e., the Triple Gem.