

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
JONATHAN S. WALTERS,
WHITMAN COLLEGE, 2017

Madhudāyaka

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

[391. {394.}¹ Madhudāyaka²]

I had a well-made hermitage,
on the banks of River Indus.
There³ I am instructing students
in history and [reading] signs. (1) [3706]

They lived on the Indus' slopes,
desiring teachings,⁴ learned folks,⁵
masters in Vedic sciences,⁶
wanting to hear good instruction.⁷ (2) [3707]

They were skilled in interpreting⁸
omens as well as [reading] signs.⁹
Searching for ultimate meaning,
they then dwelt within the forest. (3) [3708]

The Sambuddha named Sumedha
arose in the world at that time.
Being [filled] with pity for us,
the [Buddha, the] Guide,¹⁰ approached [us]. (4) [3709]

¹*Apadāna* numbers provided in {fancy brackets} correspond to the BJTS edition, which contains more individual poems than does the PTS edition dictating the main numbering of this translation.

²“Honey Donor”

³reading *tattha* with BJTS for PTS *tassa*, “his”

⁴*dhammakāmā*. BJTS gloss just gives *dharmakāmī*. I do not capitalize “teachings” because I assume the term is used more generically to mean doctrines, rather than the Dhamma.

⁵*vinītā*

⁶*chalaṅge*, lit., “six branches” of Vedic science. RD, S.V.: “the set of six Vedāṅgas, disciplines of Vedic science, viz. 1. kappa, 2. vyākaraṇā, 3. nirutti, 4. sikkhā, 5. chando (vicchiti), 6. joti-sattha (thus enumd at VvA 265; at PvA 97 in sequence 4, 1, 3, 2, 6, 5): D iii.269; Vv 6316; Pv ii.613; Miln 178, 236.”

⁷reading *susāsanaṃ sotukāmā* with BJTS for PTS *sotukāmā pi sāsanaṃ*, “also wanting to hear instructions.” BJTS gloss gives *anuśāsanaya asanu kāmāttā*, “desiring to listen to instructions,” and I follow suit in the generic translation here, rather than understand the term as the “Sasana,” the Buddha’s “dispensation”

⁸*uppādāgamane*, lit., “coming on of omens (RD: *uppāda* 1, BJTS gloss *utpāta*)” or “arrival of omens.” BJTS glosses *āgamane* as *śāstrayehi*, “traditional learning” (about omens), apparently conflating the term with *āgama*, which can mean the scriptures of manuals of particular religious groups, or more generally “meaning, understanding,” likewise a meaning of the root *ā + gam*. BJTS explains this *utpātaśāstra* as “declaring [omens] good or bad (*śubhāśubha*) having looked at/with an eye toward unnatural changes connected with ghosts (*bhūtayan piḷibanda asvābhāvika venasvīm balā*)”

⁹BJTS gloss takes this *lakṣaṇaśāstra* as involving the signs on the body/science of interpreting bodily marks.

¹⁰*vināyako*

Fashioning a mat out of grass¹¹
for Sumedha, the World's Leader,
the Great Hero who had approached,
I gave [it] to the World's Best One. (5) [3710]

Taking honey from the forest,
I gave [it] to the Best Buddha.
The Sambuddha, having consumed
[it], spoke these words [to us back then]: (6) [3711]

"He who gave this honey to me,
[feeling well-] pleased by [his] own hands,
I shall relate details of him;
[all of] you listen to my words: (7) [3712]

Because of this honey-giving,
and because of the mat of grass,
for thirty thousand aeons he
will delight in the world of gods. (8) [3713]

[After] thirty thousand aeons,
arising in Okkāka's clan,
the one whose name is Gotama
will be the Teacher in the world. (9) [3714]

Worthy heir to that one's *Dhamma*,
Dhamma's legitimate offspring,
knowing well all the defilements,
he'll reach nirvana, undefiled." (10) [3715]

Coming here from the world of gods,
[when I] approached [my] mother's womb,
there then rained a rain of honey;¹²
the earth was covered with honey.¹³ (11) [3716]

When I was coming out from the
womb, as though very unhappily,¹⁴
there again a rain of honey
is raining for me constantly. (12) [3717]

¹¹*tīṇisantharakarṇ katvā*

¹²*madhuvasso* (BJTS reads *madhuvassam*) *pavassittha*

¹³*chādayaṇ madhunā mahiṇ*

¹⁴reading *kucchchīyā va suduttaram* (lit., "as though very hard to cross over from the womb") with BJTS for PTS *kumbiyā vasuduttaraṇ* ("from a pot over the earth" ?). I follow BJTS gloss in translating this BJTS reading.

Having departed from the house,
I went forth into homelessness.
I am receiving¹⁵ food [and] drink:
that's the fruit of giving honey. (13) [3718]

[Whether] born human [or] divine,
I succeed in all [my] wishes.
Just because of that honey-gift,
I attained [my] arahantship.¹⁶ (14) [3719]

When the god is raining, I am always living
undefiled [and] happy, on grass four fingers [high],
or¹⁷ covered¹⁸ by a tree [bursting forth] in full bloom,¹⁹
in an empty house, a pavilion, [or] tree root.²⁰ (15-16) [3720]²¹

I've overcome all existence,
great [or] small [or] in the middle.²²
Today I'm free of defilements;
now there will be no more rebirth. (17) [3721]

In the thirty thousand aeons
since I gave that gift at that time,
I've come to know no bad rebirth:
that's the fruit of giving honey. (18) [3722]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
all [new] existence is destroyed.
All defilements are exhausted;
now there will be no more rebirth. (19) [3723]

¹⁵lit., "I am a receiver of"

¹⁶lit., "I attained the destruction of the outflows" (*āsavakkhayaṇ*). This has to be read as a reference to the much later (present) life, for if he had become an arahant in the time of Sikhi Buddha he would not have been reborn during the time of the present (Gotama) Buddha.

¹⁷lit., "and," *ccha*

¹⁸reading *sañcchhanne* with BJTS for PTS *ccha chappade* ("and with six feet"?)

¹⁹reading *sampupphite* with BJTS for PTS *samphite*

²⁰reading *mūlake* with PTS (and BJTS alt.) as preferable to BTJTS *mūle*, which would make this line (only) an eleven-syllable foot.

²¹PTS treats this as two four-footed verses with six- (rather than eight-) syllable feet; BJTS treats it as a single verse with twelve-syllable feet. Except the divergences indicated, the Pāli is the same in both.

²²reading *majjhe mahante hīne* with BJTS for PTS *majjhe mayhaṇ bhāvā*, "my existences in the middle."

My being in Buddha's presence²³
was a very good thing for me.
The three knowledges are attained;
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (20) [3724]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (21) [3725]

Thus indeed Venerable Madhudāyaka Thera spoke these verses.

The legend of Madhudāyaka Thera is finished.

²³here too BJTS and PTS agree in presenting the variant reading