

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
JONATHAN S. WALTERS,
WHITMAN COLLEGE, 2017

Buddhasañña

Jonathan S. Walters

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[479. {482.}¹ Buddhasañña²]

In [reading] marks³ and history,⁴
with glosses⁵ [and] ritual law,
[I was] learned, mantra-knowing,⁶
a master of the three Vedas. (1) [5039]

[Many] students came to me then,
resembling a river stream.
I am teaching mantras to them,
night and day, [I am] not lazy. (2) [5040]

The Sambuddha named Siddhattha
arose in the world at that time.
Having driven out the darkness,
he displayed the light of knowledge. (3) [5041]

A certain one of my students
conversed with⁷ my [other] students;
having heard the fact [he discussed],
they then announced [the fact] to me: (4) [5042]

“A Buddha’s risen in the world,
an Omniscient One, World-Leader.
The people are turning to him;
we’re not going to get [anything].”⁸ (5) [5043]

“Buddhas are Born Spontaneously,⁹
[those] Eyeful Ones, Greatly Famed Ones.
Why then don’t I also [go] see
the Best Buddha, the World-Leader?”¹⁰ (6) [5044]

¹Apadāna 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“Buddha Perceiver”

³lakkhaṇe

⁴itihāse

⁵sa-nighaṇḍu

⁶lit., “mantra-bearer”

⁷lit., “to”

⁸lābho amhaṇ na hessati, lit., “there will not be receiving for us”

⁹pronounce as spontan’yasly (4 syllable) to keep the meter

¹⁰this verse is presumably thought by the protagonist upon hearing the worries of his students.

Having taken my deer-leather,
[my] robes of bark, [and] water-pot,¹¹
departing from [my] hermitage,
I advised [my] students [like this]: (7) [5045]

“Like a glomerous fig tree bloom,¹²
[and] like the rabbit in the moon,¹³
[and] like the [mother’s] milk of crows,¹⁴
a World-Leader’s hard to obtain. (8) [5046]

A Buddha’s risen in the world!
Even human birth’s hard to get,
and hearing’s¹⁵ very hard to get,
when both of them occur [at once]. (9) [5047]

A Buddha’s risen in the world!
We’ll get to see [him in] our lives.¹⁶
Come, we will [now] all go into
the Sammāsambuddha’s presence.” (10) [5048]

They all were holding water-pots,
[and] dressed in rough [bark and] deer-hide.
They,¹⁷ bearing weights of matted hair,¹⁸
then departed from the forest. (11) [5049]

Looking but a plough’s length ahead,¹⁹
searching for ultimate meaning,
coming like baby elephants,
[they were] without fear, like lions. (12) [5050]

¹¹like the deer-leather (*ajina*) and bark-robes (*vākacchīraṇ*), the water-pot (*ka-maṇḍalu*, a long-spouted jar for carrying water) is a distinctive possession, and signifier of non-Buddhist ascetics

¹²*odumbarakapupphaṇ va. Odumbaraka* (BJTS *odumbarika*) means “related to the *udumbara* tree, which is *Ficus Gomerata*, Sinh. *dimbul*.”

¹³*cchandamhi sasakaṇ yathā*

¹⁴cty (p. 488) explains, “as milk is hard to obtain for (or of) crows due to their being oppressed by [having] little, day and night”

¹⁵i.e., hearing the Buddha, “a listening” (*savanaṇ*)

¹⁶lit., “we will receive eyes/vision our life”. BJTS gloss is weak here:

¹⁷PTS *Je* is obviously a typographical mistake for *Te* (BJTS’ reading)

¹⁸*jaṭābhārabharitā* (PTS), *jaṭābhārena bharitā* (BJTS)

¹⁹*yugamattaṇ pekkhamānā*, lit., “looking ahead the extent of a plough,” i.e., just a little, keeping their eyes on the ground in front of them

Free of cares and unwavering,²⁰
clever and living peacefully,
wandering about for gleaning,²¹
they approached the Best of Buddhas. (13) [5051]

When a league and a half was left²²
[to go], illness arose in me.
Remembering the Best Buddha,
I passed away [right] on the spot. (14) [5052]

In the ninety-four aeons since
I obtained that perception then,
I've come to know no bad rebirth:
the fruit of perceiving Buddhas. (15) [5053]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
all [new] existence is destroyed.
Like elephants with broken chains,
I am living without constraint. (16) [5054]

Being in Best Buddha's presence
was a very good thing for me.
The three knowledges are attained;
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (17) [5055]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (18) [5056]

Thus indeed Venerable Buddhasañña Thera spoke these verses.

The legend of Buddhasañña Thera is finished.

²⁰reading *appakicchā aloluppā* with BJTS for PTS *appabhāsā alīlatā*, “saying little and having no playfulness (or very serious),” a possible but unusual reading; both terms of the BJTS reading, unlike those of the PTS reading, have solid witness in other texts.

²¹*uñcchāya ccharamānā*

²²*diyaddhayojane sese*, lit., “when a half less than two leagues remained,” following BJTS Sinhala gloss