

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
JONATHAN S. WALTERS,
WHITMAN COLLEGE, 2017

Puḷinuppāḍaka

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

[484. {487.}¹ Pulinuppādaka²]

On a Himalayan mountain,
[I'm] Devala the ascetic.
My meditation walkway there
was made by non-human beings.³ (1) [5140]

Bearing a weight of matted hair,
carrying a water-pot then,
searching for ultimate meaning,
I departed from the forest. (2) [5141]

Eighty-six thousand students [there,]
waited upon me at that time.
Well-known together with their deeds,⁴
they are living in the forest. (3) [5142]

Going out from the hermitage,
I made a stupa out of sand.
Assembling various flowers,
I worshipped⁵ that stupa then. (4) [5143]

Bringing pleasure to [my] heart there,
I [re-]entered the hermitage.
All [my] students, come together,
questioned me [about] what that meant.⁶ (5) [5144]

“[All of] us would like to find out
which deity you're honoring
[at that] stupa made out of sand:
being asked, please tell [that] to us.” (6) [5145]

“The Eyeful Ones, Greatly Famed Ones,
have no views⁸ [and] no magic spells;⁹

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“Sand-Generator”. BTS reads *Pulin*°

³reading *amānussehi māpito* with BJTS for PTS *amānussikamāpito* (roughly the same meaning: “non-human-made”)

⁴*sahakammāni*

⁵lit., “did *pūjā*”

⁶lit., “asked me that meaning”

⁷reading *no* with BJTS for PTS *me*

⁸*nidditṭhā*

⁹*no mantapade*

they're the ones I am honoring,
the Best Buddhas, Greatly Famed Ones." (7) [5146]

"In what way are they Great Heroes,
Omniscient Ones, Lords of the World?
What do they look like?¹⁰ What conduct?
In what way are they Greatly Famed?" (8) [5147]

"Buddhas have thirty-two great marks,
and also forty [adult] teeth.¹¹
Their eyes with heifer-eyelashes¹²
resemble wild licorice fruits.¹³ (9) [5148]

And when those Buddhas are walking,¹⁴
they look but a plough's length ahead.¹⁵
They do not have a person's voice;¹⁶
their euphonic sound¹⁷ is not heard. (10) [5149]

Also, when those Well-Gone-Ones walk,
they lift up [one foot at a time],¹⁸
[always] starting [with] the right foot:
that is the nature of Buddhas. (11) [5150]

And those Buddhas are not afraid,
[just] like lions, the kings of beasts.
They do not [ever] praise themselves,
and don't revile living beings. (12) [5151]

¹⁰or "what caste are they?," *kathaṇ vaṇṇa*^o (BJTS reads, more correctly, *kathaṇ vaṇṇā*)

¹¹*cchattārīsa-ddijāpi ccha* (PTS), *°dviijāpi ccha* (BJTS), following BJTS Sinh. gloss in understanding *dvija* as "tooth" ("twice born," hence the adult teeth).

¹²reading *nettā gopa[k]khumā* with BJTS for PTS *gopamukhā* ("face to face with a cow")

¹³*jiṇṇjukaphalasannibhā*. The *jiṇṇjuka* (also known as *guñja* in Pāli) shrub, Sinh. *huninda* (BJTS gloss) or *olinda* is *Abrus precatorius* (*Legum.*). It bears distinctive, small red or black berries which serve as the smallest jeweller's weight and are used in a traditional Sri Lankan board game; the present epithet presumably refers to the (very) black berries borne by this plant.

¹⁴lit., "going"

¹⁵*yugamattaṇ ccha pekkhare* lit., "looking ahead the extent of a plough," i.e., just a little, keeping their eyes on the ground in front of them

¹⁶lit., "there is not to them a person-speaking"

¹⁷*sandhisaddo*

¹⁸lit., "they go lifting up"

They are free of pride and contempt,
the same for all living beings.
Buddhas [only] praise selflessly:
that is the nature of Buddhas. (13) [5152]

And [when] Buddhas are being born,
they radiate light [from themselves],
[and] in six [different] ways¹⁹ they cause
this whole [bountiful] earth to quake. (14) [5153]

And they are [able to] see hell,
and hell is cooled off at that time.
A massive cloud rains forth [as well]:
that is the nature of Buddhas. (15) [5154]

Such-like are those Great Elephants,
Incomparable,²⁰ of Great Fame;
in beauty they are unsurpassed,²¹
the Thus-Gone-Ones, Beyond Measure.“ (16) [5155]

All of [my] students, respectful,
[then] expressed [their] thanks for my speech,
and²² likewise went along [with me],
as far as they could [and] had strength. (17) [5156]

Wishing for [their] own [good] karma,
they’re worshipping [that] sand [stupa].
Having faith in that speech [of mine],
their minds drifted²³ to Buddhahood. (18) [5157]

Then a God’s Son, Greatly Famous,
fell down from Tusitā heaven.
He was born in a mother’s womb,
making the ten-thousand [worlds] quake. (19) [5158]

I stood on the walkway which was
near [my] hermitage [at that time].

¹⁹ *chabbikāraṇ* (PTS), *chappakāraṇ* (BJTS)

²⁰ *atulyā*

²¹ *vaṇṇato anatikkantā*, following BJTS Sinhala gloss: *rūpakāya sampattiyeṇ no ikma-
vanu hākkō ya*, “it is not possible to surpass them in good fortune as regards [their]
form-bodies.

²² reading *ccha* with BJTS (and PTS alt.) fr PTS *va*

²³ lit., “are gone”

All [my] students, having gathered,
came into my presence [just then]. (20) [5159]

“The earth, bull-like, is bellowing;
it’s roaring like the king of beasts.
It’s shaking²⁴ like a crocodile;
what will this be the result of?” (21) [5160]

“The Buddha²⁵ I detailed [for you],
close to the stupa made of sand,
the Blessed One, the Teacher, now
has been born in a mother’s womb.” (22) [5161]

Discussing the Teaching for them,
[and] having detailed the Great Sage,
exhorting [my] own students [there],
I sat in lotus position. (23) [5162]

[All] my strength was [then] exhausted,
due to a serious²⁶ illness.
Remembering the Best Buddha,
I passed away [right] on the spot. (24) [5163]

All [of my] students assembled;
they made [me] a pyre at that time,
and taking my mortal remains,²⁷
they lifted [me] onto the pyre. (25) [5164]

Having attended to the pyre,
hands pressed together on [their] heads,
wounded²⁸ by the arrows of grief,
come together they lamented. (26) [5165]

While they were wailing [uselessly,]²⁹
I [then] came [back] to the pyre [there].

²⁴reading *salati* with BJTS for PTS *saddati*

²⁵lit., “Sambuddha”

²⁶*paramena*, “superior” “best.” BJTS Sinhala gloss: *dāḍi*, “strong”

²⁷*kalebarañ*, lit., “corpse” or “body”

²⁸*pareta*, lit., “overcome by” “afflicted with”

²⁹*tesañ lālappamānañ* (gen. abs. construction). *Lālappati* means “lament, wail” as well as “to talk too much,” “to talk silly,” the intensive of *lapati*, “to mutter, talk, prattle”. I have interpolated “[uselessly]” *metri causa*, but in doing so convey the connotation of the term (and the subsequent speech by the ghost of the teacher) that their wailing was excessive or pointless.

“I am your [dead] teacher, wise ones;
do not lament [my passing on]. (27) [5166]

Endeavor for the highest good,
night and day not being lazy.
Don’t be negligent, all of you;
your moment³⁰ is offered to you.” (28) [5167]

Exhorting [my] own students [thus],
I returned to the world of gods.
For eighteen aeons [after that]
I delighted in the gods’ world. (29) [5168]

And [then] a hundred times I was
a king who turns the wheel [of law].
Also another hundred times,
I was a king who turns the wheel.
Also another hundred times
I [then] exercised divine rule. (30) [5169]³¹
In the remaining aeons I
transmigrated as god or man.³²
I’ve come to know no bad rebirth:
that’s the fruit of generating.³³ (31) [5170]

As in the month of Kattikā,³⁴
many trees are in full flower,
likewise in that very season,
I have flowered as a great sage. (32) [5171]

Vigorous effort’s the yoked ox,

³⁰BJTS Sinh gloss: “the birth of a Buddha, which frees [one] from the eight evil moments [Sinh dict. i.e., (1) birth in hell, (2) birth as an animal, (3) birth as a demon, (4) birth in the two Brahma worlds where neither body nor mind exists, (5) birth in a foreign country devoid of the Buddha’s Teaching, (6) birth with the five senses confused or perverted, (7) birth as a non-religious person, and (8) birth in a Buddha-less age]”

³¹PTS presents this as a six-footed verse, in an apparently mistaken (and redundant) repetition of the first two feet (a-b) as c-d. BJTS presents a standard four-footed verse, omitting PTS 30c-d (i.e., corresponding to PTS 30a-b and 30e-f).

³²*vokiṇṇo* (BJTS and PTS alt. reads *vokiṇṇaṇ*), lit., “mixed”. I follow BJTS in taking the term to refer to a mix of births as a god and births as a human.

³³*uppādassa*. The term (as too in the name ascribed to this monk) apparently refers to the “generating” (or “producing”) of the stupa made of sand.

³⁴the name of a lunar month, Skt. *Kṛttikā*, BSkt *Karthikā*, Sinh. *il*, corresponding to October-November

