

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
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Dabbamalla

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[531. {534.}¹ Dabbamalla²]

The Victor, Padumuttara,
the Sage, Knower of Every World,
the One who had [Five] Eyes, arose
a hundred thousand aeons hence. (1) [5769]

The Admonisher,³ Instructor,⁴
Crosser-Over⁵ of all that breathe,
Skilled at Preaching,⁶ [he], the Buddha,
caused many folks to cross [the flood]. (2) [5770]

Merciful,⁷ Compassionate One,⁸
Well-Wisher⁹ of all that breathe, he
established in the five precepts
all the rivals who had arrived. (3) [5771]

In this way he was Unconfused¹⁰
and Very Well-Known¹¹ by rivals,
Ornamented¹² by arahants
who were masters [and] neutral ones. (4) [5772]

The [body of the] Sage So Great
rose up fifty-eight cubits¹³ [tall];

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.

²BJTS reads *Dabba*. In the colophon both PTS and BJTS give “Dabbamallaputta,” “Dabba the son of the Mallians”. A historical monk, famous as the foremost among those who assigned lodgings (*senāsanapaññāpakānaṃ*, lit., “beds and chairs”), see DPPN I:1059-1060. “He was called Dabba because he was said to be born of his mother while she was being burnt in the funeral pyre; when the flames were extinguished, the child was found lying on one of the posts of the pyre (*dabbatthambhe*)” I translate this term (*dabbapuñjamhi*) more literally as “pile of wood.” The name Dabba means “wood”.

³ovādako

⁴viññāpako

⁵tārako

⁶desanākusalo

⁷anukampako

⁸kāruṇiko

⁹hitesi

¹⁰nirākulaṇ

¹¹suññātaṇ, or “empty [of ill-will],” which is BJTS Sinhala gloss reading; I construe the epithet as *su* + *ñāta*

¹²vicchittaṇ

¹³*ratanāna-aṭṭha-paññāsaṇ uggato*. A *ratana* (Sinh. *riyan*) is figured as twelve-fingers (*aṅgula*), according to Sinh-Eng Dictionary about eighteen inches. The claim here then is that Padumuttara Buddha was about 1044 inches (or 87 feet) tall.

he was Valuable Like Gold,¹⁴
Bearing the Thirty-Two Great Marks. (5) [5773]

[People's] lifespan at that time was
[fully] one hundred thousand years.
Remaining [in the world] so long,
he ferried many folks across. (6) [5774]

I was then a millionaire's son
in Haṃsavatī, of great fame.
Approaching the Lamp of the World,¹⁵
I heard the preaching of *Dhamma*. (7) [5775]

I was happy after hearing
the words of [the Buddha] praising
his follower, the [monk who was]
appointing lodgings¹⁶ for the monks. (8) [5776]

[My] head bowed at the feet of the
Great Sage, I aspired to attain
that place, [foremost] among those who
do the Assembly's management. (9) [5777]

At that time the Great Hero spoke;¹⁷
he praised my karma [in this way]:
“Who fed the Leader of the World,
with the Assembly, for a week, (10) [5778]

whose eyes are [just like] lotus leaves,
lion-shouldered, with golden skin;
fallen down in front of my feet,
he has wished for that [foremost] place. (11) [5779]

In one hundred thousand aeons,
arising in Okkāka's clan,
the one whose name is Gotama
will be the Teacher in the world. (12) [5780]

That Buddha's follower [will be]
well-known by the name of Dabba.

¹⁴*kañcchanagghiyasaṅkāso*, lit., “like a gold valuable thing” or “like a gold festoon work”

¹⁵*lokapajjotaṇ*

¹⁶lit., “beds [and] chairs” or “beds and food”

¹⁷reading *tadā 'bhāsi mahāvīro* with BJTS for PTS *tadahaṇ sa mahāvīro*

This one is going to be the top
assigner of the lodgings then.“ (13) [5781]

Due to that karma done very well,
with intention and [firm] resolve,
discarding [my] human body,
I went to Tāvātimsa [then]. (14) [5782]

Three hundred times [the lord of gods],
I exercised divine rule [there],
and [then] five hundred times I was
a king who turns the wheel [of law]. (15) [5783]

[There was also] much local rule,
innumerable by counting.
Through the power of that karma,
I was happy in every place. (16) [5784]

The Leader known as Vipassi,
with Insight into Everything,¹⁸
Charming-Eyed One, arose in the
world, ninety-one aeons ago. (17) [5785]

Evil-minded, I reproached a
follower of that Neutral One
who had destroyed all defilements,
despite having known, “he is pure.” (18) [5786]

Having provided meal-tickets,¹⁹
I offered rice [well-cooked] in milk
to great sages, the followers
of that very Hero of Men.²⁰ (19) [5787]

During this auspicious aeon
Brahmā’s Kinsman, Greatly Famed One,
named Kassapa through [his] lineage,²¹
Best Debater,²² [Buddha,] arose. (20) [5788]

Lighting up the dispensation,
overcoming evil rivals,

¹⁸*sabbadhammavipassako*

¹⁹or “counting sticks:” *salākaṇ*

²⁰*tasseva naravīrassa*

²¹reading *gottena* with BJTS for PTS *nāmena* (“named” “known as”)

²²*vadatarjvaro*

instructing the instruct-able, he
reached nirvana,²³ with followers.²⁴ (21) [5789]

Hair-loosened, teary-faced, the gods,
were moved [and] they wept when the Lord
and students reached nirvana, [his]
dispensation reaching²⁵ [its] goal: (22) [5790]

“Alas! We have little merit.
The *Dhamma*-Eye passes away.²⁶
We’ll not see the compliant ones,
we will not hear the great Teaching.” (23) [5791]

[Just] then the whole of this [great] earth,
which is unshaking, shook with shakes,
and the ocean, as though in grief,²⁷
was crying a piteous song. (24) [5792]

[And] drums in [all] four directions,
were played by non-human beings;
lightening burst out²⁸ from everywhere,
frightening²⁹ [beings who were there]. (25) [5793]

Meteors³⁰ fell down from the sky,
and he whose flag is smoke³¹ was³² seen.
The wild beasts roared piteously,
and all the creatures born on earth. (26) [5794]

²³*nibbuto*

²⁴*sasāvako*, or perhaps, taking this as an epithet, “He with Followers passed away.” But the following verse reinforces the reading that his nirvana was itself a corporate event, occurring simultaneously with the nirvana-realizations of his followers (*sāvaka*, “listeners”) or students (*sisṣa*).

²⁵*entamhi*, fr. *eti*, loc. abs. construction

²⁶*nibbāyissati dhammakkho* (BJTS reads °*akho*), lit., “the eye of *Dhamma* will reach nirvana”

²⁷*sāgaro ccha sasoko va*

²⁸reading *phaliṃsu* with BJTS for PTS *patiṃsu*, fell down, avoiding the redundancy with the next verse in keeping with the eloquence of this passage.

²⁹lit., “carrying fear to”

³⁰*ukkā*, “fiery things”. Elsewhere the term more directly refers to fire or a firebrand itself, but this meaning of the term is appropriate here both because these “fires” fall from the sky and because the following miracle, distinguished with an “and” (*ccha*), specifies fire as such. Cty (p. 506) gives *aggikhandhā*, “great masses of fire”

³¹*dhūmaketu*, that is, “fire”

³²lit., “is”

Seeing fierce omens³³ marking³⁴ the
setting of the dispensation,³⁵
moved, we monks who [still remained] there,
then thought [about it in this way]: (27) [5795]

“[Now], without our³⁶ dispensation,
enough with life [itself for us].
Entering the forest we’ll strive
in the Victor’s dispensation.” (28) [5796]

We saw a tall, superb mountain
[there] in the forest at that time.
Ascending by a flight of stairs,³⁷
we fell down³⁸ on the flight of stairs. (29) [5797]

Then an elder³⁹ admonished us:
“A Buddha’s rising’s hard to get;
well-got for you is getting faith,
the dispensation’s small remnant.
Fallen down they’re missing [their] chance,
in the endless suffering-sea.
Therefore strong effort should be made
while the Sage’s thought remains.” (30-31) [5798-5799]

That elder was an arahant,
a non-returner followed him.⁴⁰
Fixed in good morality, the
rest [of us] went to the gods’ world. (32) [5800]

In the pure abode that one [monk]⁴¹
reached nirvana, crossed existence;⁴²
[but] I and Pukkusāti [too],

³³*uppāde dāruṇe*

³⁴*sūvake*, lit., “making manifest” “indicating,” see Buddhaddatta *Pāli-Sinhala Akārādiya*, s.v.

³⁵“setting” as in the setting of the sun, reading *sāsanatthagama-suvake* (read *sūvake*) with BJTS for PTS *sāsanatthañ ccha sūcchakaṇ*

³⁶reading *sāsanena vināmhākaṇ* with BJTS for PTS *sāsanena vinā sammā*

³⁷reading *nissenīyā* with BJTS for PTS *nissenīyā*

³⁸reading *pātayimhase* with BJTS for PTS *pātayimhase*

³⁹*thero*

⁴⁰i.e., to nirvana, as opposed (and superior) to heaven or “the gods’ world”

⁴¹i.e., the “non-returner” accompanying the arahant (who went nowhere at all, i.e., who had no more rebirth in any abode)

⁴²*nibbuto tiṇṇasaṇsāro*

Sabhiya, likewise Bāhiya,
so too Kumāra-Kassapa,
reborn here and there we are [now]⁴³
freed from the bonds of existence,
pitied by Gotama [Buddha]. (33-34) [5801-5802]

Born a Kusināran Malla,
even in the womb I'm conscious.
Dead mother⁴⁴ raised up on a pyre;
I was [one who] fell out⁴⁵ from that. (35) [5803]

I landed⁴⁶ on a pile of wood;⁴⁷
therefore I was known as "Dabba."⁴⁸
Through the strength of holy living,⁴⁹
I was freed, [just] seven years old. (36) [5804]

Due to the fruit of the milk-rice,⁵⁰
I'm endowed with the five fine traits;⁵¹
due to reproaching the pure monk,⁵²
I was urged by many bad folks.⁵³ (37) [5805]

Now I am one who's passed beyond
both merit and evil [karma].
Attaining supreme peacefulness,
I am [now] living, undefiled. (38) [5806]

⁴³lit., "went up to," following BJTS Sinh. gloss and reading with BJTS *tattha tatthu-paṇḍa mayam* for PTS *tattha tatth' upagāmiyaṇ* ("he went up to here and there")

⁴⁴reading *matā mātā* with BJTS (and PTS alt. cited as *mātā mātā*?) for PTS *mātā pitā* ("mother and father")

⁴⁵reading *nippatito* with BJTS (and PTS alt.) for PTS *nibbattito*, "produced" "brought forth"

⁴⁶lit., "fallen"

⁴⁷*dabba-puñjamhi*

⁴⁸"Wood"

⁴⁹or "of celibacy", reading *brahmacchāribalena* with BJTS (and cf. PTS alt. *brahmacchara*) for PTS *brahmaccheraphalena* ("through the fruit of Brahma-[]?")

⁵⁰see above, v. 19 [5797]; this was a pious act done by the protagonist during the time of Vipassī Buddha

⁵¹*pañcchaṅgehi upāgato*. RD, the "five gentlemanly qualities" of a king or brahmin are *sujāta* (good birth), *ajjhāyaka* (education, learning in the Vedas), *abhirūpa* (handsomeness), *sīlavā* (moral conduct) and *pañña* (wisdom)

⁵²lit., "the one whose defilements are destroyed," i.e., "the arahant". BJTS reads *khīṇāsavopavādena* for PTS' misleading ungrammatical *khīṇāsavo pavādena* ("because of the arahant reproaching" rather than "because of reproaching the arahant")

⁵³*pāpehi bahu cchodito*

Making the compliant ones laugh,
I appointed lodgings [for them].
The Victor, pleased by⁵⁴ that virtue,
[then] placed me in that foremost place. (39) [5807]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
all [new] existence is destroyed.
Like elephants with broken chains,
I am living without constraint. (40) [5808]

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! (41) [5809]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (42) [5810]

Thus indeed Venerable Dabbamallaputta Thera spoke these verses.

The legend of Dabbamallaputta Thera is finished.

⁵⁴lit., "in"