

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
JONATHAN S. WALTERS,
WHITMAN COLLEGE, 2017

Vanavaccha

Jonathan S. Walters

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[546. {549.}]¹ Vanavacchcha²

In this [present] lucky aeon
Brahmā's Kinsman, Greatly Famed One,
known by the name of Kassapa,³
Best Debater,⁴ [Buddha,] arose. (1) [6273]

Then I, after having gone forth
in the Buddha's dispensation,
wandering in the holy life⁵
as long as [I] lived, fell from there.⁶ (2) [6274]

Due to that karma done very well,
with intention and [firm] resolve,
discarding [my] human body,
I went to Tāvātimsa [then]. (3) [6275]

Fallen from there, in a forest,
I was [then born as] a pigeon.⁷
A Buddhist monk⁸ [was] living there,
always delighting in trances,⁹
loving-hearted, compassionate,
with a face always greatly pleased,¹⁰
even-minded, a great hero,
learned in the [four] boundless [states].¹¹ (4-5) [6276-6277]

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"Forest Vacchcha," a historical monk (and one of many from the Vacchcha clan). See DPPN II: 828

³One BJTS alt. reads *gottena*, "by lineage"

⁴*vadatan varo*

⁵or "in celibacy": reading *bhramacchāriyam* with BJTS (PTS alt. *brahmacchārī*, "being celibate") for PTS *brahmaccheran* ("brahmā-[]?")

⁶or "died," "passed away"

⁷or dove, *kapoto*, BJTS Sinh. gloss *paraviyak*

⁸*bhikkhu*

⁹*jhānarato sadā*

¹⁰*pamuditānāno*. The Pāli is unambiguous and neither edition provides alt. readings, but one would expect a reading involving *muditā* ("sympathetic joy" or "joy in the joy of others," the third of the four "boundless states") given the reference to them in the final foot, and given that the other three are clearly designated here. Perhaps "always having a greatly pleased face" is to be taken as indicative of being characterized by sympathetic joy (*muditā*).

¹¹also known as *brahmavihāras*: love, pity or compassion, sympathetic joy and even-mindedness or equanimity. I follow BJTS Sinh. gloss in understanding "boundless"

In not a long time I trusted
that follower of the Buddha,¹²
whose thoughts were without obstructions,
friendly toward all living beings. (6) [6278]

Then whenever [I] approached¹³ him,
every day he preached the *Dhamma*,
and gave [a little of his] food
to me, seated before [his] feet. (7) [6279]

After living [like that] back then,
with great love for the Victor's son,
having died¹⁴ I went¹⁵ to heaven,
like home [after] being abroad.¹⁶ (8) [6280]

Fallen from heaven I'm reborn
as human due to good karma.
Throwing away [life in] the house,
I [then] went forth repeatedly.¹⁷ (9) [6281]

As monk, ascetic [or] brahmin,
I was thus one who had gone forth,
becoming a forest-dweller
[in] various hundreds [of lives]. (10) [6282]

And now in [my] final rebirth,
a brahmin [named] Vacchchagotta
in lovely Kapilavastu,
I set forth along with [my] wife.¹⁸ (11) [6283]

My mother's pregnancy craving
[when she was] close to giving birth,

(*appamaññāsu kovido*) in this way, and in construing v. [6277] as a continuation of [6276].

¹²*vissattho nacchirenāsiṃ tasmīṃ sugatasāvake*, lit., "I was trusting in [that] follower of the Well-Gone-One" (reading °*āsiṃ* with BJTS for PTS *asmiṇ*, "in that")

¹³lit., "having approached"

¹⁴lit., "fallen from there"

¹⁵*gato*, lit., "am gone"

¹⁶BJTS reads *pavāsā* for PTS (and BJTS alt.) *pavāso*; accepting that reading, and taking it as an ablative, "after" would not require the square brackets

¹⁷*bahuso*. BJTS reads *lahuso* ("quickly"). Especially given the following verse, I see no reason to change, and indeed prefer the PTS reading

¹⁸reading *vacchchagotta dvijo tassa jāyāya* for PTS *Vacchchagotto ti Jotissa jāyāya* ("Vacchchagotta' with [my] wife [named] Jotissa")

resolved [her] to live in the woods,
when [I] had come out of [her] womb. (12) [6284]

[My] mother then gave birth to me
within a beautiful forest.

As I departed from her womb,
they swaddled me in saffron [cloth].¹⁹ (13) [6285]

After that Prince Siddhartha was
born, Banner of the Śākya Clan.²⁰
I became his beloved friend,
held in confidence and honored. (14) [6286]

When Beings' Hardwood²¹ departed,
renouncing [all of his] vast fame,
after having gone forth as well,
I went to the Himalayas. (15) [6287]

Seeing respected Kassapa,
preacher of rigor, in the woods,²²
hearing the Victor'd arisen,
I approached the Coachman of Men.²³ (16) [6288]

He [then] preached the *Dhamma* to me,
with all of the meanings explained.
Then, going forth [under Buddha,]
I went to the forest again. (17) [6289]

Zealously living there I [then]
learned²⁴ the six special knowledges.
O! I have obtained a good gain,
being pitied by [my] good friend. (18) [6290]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
all [new] existence is destroyed.

¹⁹*kāsāyena*, or more specifically, “in a saffron [monk's robe]”. Saffron robes (whose origin is in the turmeric-soaked shrouds of ancient Indian corpses) were and are used by renunciators of various stripes, though for Buddhist hearers the word certainly invokes (and means) a specifically Buddhist monk's robe.

²⁰*śākyakuladdhajo*

²¹reading *sattasāre hi nikkhante* (loc. abs. construction) with BJTS (and PTS alt, reading °*sāre hi* for *sārebhi*, sic) for PTS *sārehi nikkhanto* (“departed with hardwoods”)

²²lit., “in a haunt in the woods”

²³*narasrathij*

²⁴*apassayin*, or “saw” “realized”

Like elephants with broken chains,
I am living without constraint. (19) [6291]

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! (20) [6292]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (21) [6293]

Thus indeed Venerable Vanavacchcha Thera spoke these verses.

The legend of Vanavacchcha Thera is finished.