

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
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Ekāsanadāyikā

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[14. Ekāsanadāyikā¹]

In the city, Haṃsavatī,
I was a garland-maker then.
My mother and my father too
went off to work [every day then]. (1) [166]

When the sun was high in the sky,²
I saw a [Buddhist] monk [just then,]
who was going along the road,
[so] I spread out a seat [for him]. (2) [167]

Preparing that seat with woolen
rugs with fleece and decorations,³
happy, with pleasure in [my] heart,
I [then] spoke these words [to that monk]: (3) [168]

“The ground is scorched [and] boiling hot;
the sun is at its midday high;⁴
the breezes are not blowing [now];
the time is right to come sit down.⁵ (4) [169]

This seat [already] is prepared
[just] for your sake, o sage so great;
having taken pity [on me,]
[please] sit down on this seat of mine.” (5) [170]

The monk, well-tamed, with a pure mind,
did sit down there [at my request].
Having taken his begging bowl,
I gave as much as it would hold.⁶ (6) [171]

Due to that karma done very well,
with intention and [firm] resolve,
discarding [my] human body,
I went to Tāvatiṃsa [then]. (7) [172]

There my well-made divine mansion,
well-fashioned by [giving that] seat,

¹“One-Chair-Donor”.

²lit., “in the midday sun”

³lit., “woolen rugs with long fleece [and] woolen rugs with embroidered designs”.

⁴lit., “the midday sun is fixed [in the sky]”

⁵lit., “this is a suitable time for coming to that [seat]”

⁶lit., “according to the [size of the] cavity”. Or perhaps we should read, “as much as [I had] cooked,” from *randheti*?

welled up [full] sixty leagues in height,
[and was] thirty leagues wide [back then]. (8) [173]

There were diverse couches for me,
made of gold and made of silver,
likewise [some] were made of crystal,
and also made out of ruby. (9) [174]

My couch was well-spread with cushions,
covered with embroidered wool rugs
and coverlets of silk with gems,
as well as [some] of fur with fringe.⁷ (10) [175]

Whenever I desire a trip,
filled with laughter and amusement,
I am going with the best couch,
[in accordance with] my wishes. (11) [176]

I was fixed in the chief queen's place
of eighty kings among the gods.
I was fixed in the chief queen's place
of seventy wheel-turning kings. (12) [177]

Transmigrating from birth to birth,
I [always] obtained great riches.
There was no lack in terms of wealth:
that's the fruit of [giving] one seat. (13) [178]

Transmigrating in two stations,
the human or else the divine,
I did not know another state:
that's the fruit of [giving] one seat. (14) [179]

I am reborn in [just] two castes,⁸
kṣatriyan, or else a brahmin.
Everywhere I'm of high family:
that's the fruit of [giving] one seat. (15) [180]

I know no mental turbulence,
[nor] is my heart tormented [then].
I [also] know no ugliness:
that's the fruit of [giving] one seat. (16) [181]

⁷lit., "and [coverlets of] fur [or wool] sticking up on one end" (*uddhaṇ-ekanta-lomī ccha*).

⁸or families or clans (*kule*).

Wet-nurses are waiting on me,
[and] many hump-backed servant-women;⁹
I am going from lap to lap:
that's the fruit of [giving] one seat. (17) [182]

Other people bathe and feed me,
and [they] fondle me every day.
Others anoint me with perfumes:
that's the fruit of [giving] one seat. (18) [183]

When I dwell in an empty room,
a pavilion, beneath a tree,
discerning what I am thinking,
a couch is [then] produced [for me]. (19) [184]

Now it is my final lifetime,
turning in my last existence.
Even today, breaking my reign,¹⁰
I went forth into homelessness. (20) [185]

In the hundred thousand aeons
since I gave [him] that gift back then,
I've come to know no bad rebirth:
that's the fruit of [giving] one seat. (21) [186]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
all [new] existence is destroyed.
Like elephants with broken chains,
I am living without constraint. (22) [187]

⁹PTS reads *cchelāvikā* (fr. *cchela*, “cloth”? Diaper-washers? The tradition itself is unsure, with equally obscure alternates in PTS [velāyikā, vecchcheyikā] and BJTS [velāpikā, velāyikā; BJTS reads, equally obscurely and perhaps without mss. basis, *kheḷasikā*]). The texts are in more agreement about the first part of the compound (sometimes as a separate adjective,) *khujjā*, “having a humped back,” though PTS records an alternate for that too (*bujjā*, an easy orthographical mistake). Mrs. Lily De Silva pointed out to me (personal communication) that in ancient India deformed people were often employed as servants, and the hump-backed servant woman has obvious parallels in Sanskrit literature (e.g., Mantharā [Kūnī], the hump-backed servant-woman of Queen Kaikeyī who convinces the latter to have Rāma banished, in the Hindu epic *Rāmāyana*).

¹⁰the same phrase, *rajjam chaḍetvā*, appears above, in *Therī-apadāna* v. [133], too. It literally means “having broken/cut off the kingdom/kingship/rulership/rule.” The meaning is that a ruling monarch somehow abandons his (or in this case her) own kingship/queenship to take on the religious life. Here we might translate, “Even today, having abdicated queenship, I have gone forth...”

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! (23) [188]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (24) [189]

Thus indeed Venerable¹¹ Bhikkhunī Ekāsanadāyikā spoke these verses.
The legend of Ekāsanadāyikā Therī is finished.

¹¹BJTS omits *āyasmā*.