

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
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Paṭācārā

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[20. Paṭācchārā¹]

The Victor, Padumuttara,
was a Master of Everything.
[That] Leader arose in the world
one hundred thousand aeons hence. (1) [595]

I was born in Haṃsavatī,
in a clan of millionaires then,
glistening with various gems,
endowed with supreme happiness. (2) [596]

Having approached that Great Hero,
I heard [him] preaching the *Dhamma*.
Then, pleasure born [in my heart,] I
approached the Victor for refuge. (3) [597]

Then the Victor praised as foremost
of those who follow discipline,²
a Buddhist nun, modest, neutral,
careful about what's allowed and not. (4) [598]

Then, with a heart [full] of pleasure,
wishing [I were fixed in] that place,
inviting the Ten-Powered One,³
the World's Leader, with Assembly, (5) [599]

after feeding [them] for a week,
giving them the monastic robes,⁴
bowing [my] head down at [his] feet,
I spoke these words [to that Buddha:] (6) [600]

"If it meets with success, Leader,
I will become just like the one

¹"Cloak-Wanderer," apparently a historical nun (see DPPN II: 112-114 for this implicit judgment) though apart from the list in A. of the "best of" monks and nuns (which could have been inserted into A.) the only *canonical* telling of all the details of Paṭācchārā's life, and past lives, are found in this *Apadāna* account, from which ThigA and other commentaries likely draw; remembered as foremost among the nuns who know *Vinaya* or the monastic discipline.

²*vinayadhārīnaṇ*, lit., "carry the *vinaya*"

³*dasabalaṇ*

⁴*ticchīvaraṇ*, lit., "the three monastic robes," presumably a full set of them to the Buddha and each of those in the Assembly, starting with the nun who had been declared foremost bearer of the *vinaya*

who was praised by you, O Hero,
on the eighth day before [today].” (7) [601]

Then the Teacher said [this] to me:
“Lucky one, fear not; breathe with ease.
In the not-yet-become future,
you will attain that wished-for [place]. (8) [602]

In one hundred thousand aeons,
arising in Okkāka’s clan,
the one whose name is Gotama
will be the Teacher in the world. (9) [603]

Worthy heir to that one’s *Dhamma*,
Dhamma’s legitimate offspring,
the one known as Paṭācchārā
will be the Teacher’s follower.” (10) [604]

At that time being overjoyed,
as long as life, heart [full of] love,
I attended on the Victor,
World’s Leader with [his] Assembly. (11) [605]

Due to that karma done very well,
with intention and [firm] resolve,
discarding [my] human body,
I went to Tāvatiṃsa [then]. (12) [606]

In this [present] lucky aeon
Brahma’s Kinsman, Greatly Famed One,
[the Buddha] known as Kassapa⁵
was born, the Best of Debaters. (13) [607]

The attendant of the Great Sage
was the ruler of men back then,
the king of Kāśi, named Kiki,
in Benares, greatest city. (14) [608]

I was his third [royal] daughter,
who was named Samaṇaguttā.⁶
Hearing the Best Victor’s Teaching,
I chose [to seek] ordination. (15) [609]

⁵BJTS reads “Named Kassapa according to his Lineage (*gottena*)”

⁶“Guarded Nun” “Protected Female Renouncer”

Our father did not permit it;
we [stayed] at home during that time,
comfortable⁷ royal maidens
doing [our] practice with vigor
in virginal celibacy,
for twenty times a thousand years,
fond of waiting on the Buddha,
[the king's] seven joyful daughters. (16-17) [610-611]

Samaṇī, and Samaṇaguttā,⁸
Bhikkhunī, Bhikkhadāyikā,
Dhammā, and also Sudhammā,
and seventh Saṅghadāyikā, (18) [612]

[now] I and Uppalavaṇṇā,
Khemā and the nun [named] Bhaddā,⁹
Kisāgotamī, Dhammadinnā,¹⁰
and Visākhā is the seventh. (19) [613]

Due to those karmas¹¹ done very well,
with intention and [firm] resolve,
discarding [my] human body,
I went to Tāvatiṃsa [then]. (20) [614]

And now, in [my] final rebirth,
I'm born in a millionaire's clan,
rich, prosperous, very wealthy,
in Śrāvastī, best of cities. (21) [615]

When I'd become a young woman,¹²
overpowered by [my own] thoughts,

⁷*sukhe ṭhitā*, lit., “remaining in comfort.” Pronounce all four syllables when chanting to keep the meter or, to chant as a three-syllable word, read “comfortable royal princesses”

⁸I follow the original (in both recensions) in making this first foot a nine-syllable foot through the addition of the (superfluous) “and” (*ccha*). The comma amplifies its effect, to syncopate the verse such that the (respective, exact) parallelism of the following verse (in which, however, all four feet contain the expected eight syllables) becomes apparent.

⁹ = Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesī

¹⁰given the long names, this foot is unavoidably nine-syllables long, both in Pāli and in English

¹¹here the text (in both PTS and BJTS editions) substitutes *tehi kammehi* (plural instrumental) for the ordinary *tena kammēna* (singular instrumental) in this *Apadāna* stock phrase. Perhaps “good deeds” would be better here.

¹²or “when I had attained puberty:” *yadā ccha yobbanupetā*

after seeing a man from the
country, I went [away] with him. (22) [616]

I had produced a single son;
the second one was in my womb.
At that time, I had determined,
“I’ll go [see] mother [and] father.” (23) [617]

My husband¹³ was not pleased [at that.]
Then, when he was [on a] journey,
[I] snuck out¹⁴ of the house alone,
to go to supreme Śrāvasti. (24) [618]

Then my husband¹⁵ came [after me];
he caught up with me on the road.
Then my karma-born labor pains¹⁶
began, [and they were] very cruel. (25) [619]

At the time for me to give birth,
a massive rain-cloud arose [there],
and then [my] husband having gone
to find grass,¹⁷ was killed by a snake. (26) [620]

Then miserable [and] helpless,
in the throes of painful childbirth,¹⁸
going toward a relative’s house,¹⁹
seeing an overflowing stream,²⁰ (27) [621]

carrying [my] newborn I crossed
to the stream’s other bank, alone.
After nursing [my] newborn son,
to help my other [son] to cross, (28) [622]

¹³*pati*, “lord”

¹⁴*niggatā*, lit., “was gone out of”

¹⁵*sāmi*, “master”

¹⁶lit., “winds,” *vātā*

¹⁷*dabbatthāya*, lit., “for the sake of *dabba* grass”. Presumably the husband would have sought *dabba* grass to provide shelter, or a mattress, for his gestating wife.

¹⁸*viṇṇatadukkhena*, lit., “with the suffering of giving birth”

¹⁹reading *sakulālayaṃ* (“going to the lair of [her] own clan,” BJTS gloss *siya nā nivasata* = “going to a house of [her] own relatives”) for PTS *sakuṇālayaṇ* (“to a bird’s nest”)

²⁰*kunnadiṇ pūritaṇ*, lit., “a bad river filled up.” Perhaps read *kunnadiṇ* as “rough river” rather than “small river” or “rivulet” per RD (whence my “stream”)?

I turned; an osprey carried off
my wailing babe. [Then] the current
swept [him] away, [my] other [son].
That I was overcome with grief. (29) [623]

Going to Śrāvastī city,
I heard [that] my kinsmen were dead.
Full of grief I said at that time,
extremely overcome with grief, (30) [624]

“Both of my sons have passed away,
my husband is dead on the road;
mother and father and brothers
are burning on a single pyre.” (31) [625]

Then [I grew] pale and thin, helpless;
[I was] in a low state of mind.
After that, while roaming I saw
[him,] the Charioteer of Men. (32) [626]

Then the Teacher said [this] to me:
“Do not grieve, child; breathe easily.
You should search after your [own] self;
why uselessly torment yourself? (33) [627]

There are no sons to [give] shelter,
not fathers nor even kinsmen.
There is no shelter with kinsmen
when one’s seized by the end-maker.” (34) [628]

After hearing the Sage’s speech,
I realized the first [path] fruit.
Having gone forth, in no long time,
I achieved [my] arahantship. (35) [629]

I’ve mastered the superpowers
[like] the “divine ear” element.
I know the hearts of others [too,]
I have done what the Teacher taught.²¹ (36) [630]

I remember [my] former lives;
[my] “divine eye” is purified.

²¹*satthu sāsanakārikā*, lit., “[I am] a doer of the Teacher’s dispensation”

Throwing off all the defilements,
I am²² purified, [I'm] stainless. (37) [631]

Then I learned the whole discipline,²³
in the All-Seeing-One's²⁴ presence,
and I recited it [for him,]
correctly in every detail. (38) [632]

The Victor, pleased by [my]²⁵ virtue,
[then] placed me in that foremost place:
“Paṭācchārā's alone, foremost
of those who follow discipline.”²⁶ (39) [633]

The Teacher's been worshipped by me;
[I have] done what the Buddha taught.
The heavy load has been laid down,
the ties to existence severed. (40) [634]

The reason for which I went forth,
from [my] home into homelessness —
I have [now] achieved that purpose:
destruction of all the fetters. (41) [635]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
all [new] existence is destroyed.
Like elephants with broken chains,
I am living without constraint. (42) [636]

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! (43) [637]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (44) [638]

Thus indeed Bhikkhunī Paṭācchārā spoke these verses.

²²reading *amhi* (“I am”) with BJTS for PTS *āsiṃ* (“I was” “I became”)

²³*vinayaṇ sabbaṇ*

²⁴*sabbadassino santike*

²⁵lit., “in the” “in that”

²⁶*vinayadhārīnaṇ*, lit., “carry the *vinaya*”

The legend of Paṭācchārā Therī is finished.

The Summary:²⁷

Ekūposathikā, and too
Salaḷā and Timodakā,
Ekāsanappadā, Dīpā,
Nalamālī and Gotamī,
Khemā, Uppalavaṇṇā and
Paṭācchārā the Buddhist nun.
There are four hundred verses [here,]
also ninety-six [verses more].

The Ekūposathikā Chapter, the Second

²⁷this appears only in PTS; BJTS omits the summary of the second chapter despite including the other summaries, hence presumably by mistake