

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
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Soṇā

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[26. Soṇā¹]

The Victor, Padumuttara,
was a Master of Everything.
[That] Leader arose in the world
one hundred thousand aeons hence. (1) [858]

Born then in a millionaire's clan,
I was happy, honored,² held dear.
Approaching the Excellent Sage,³
I heard [his] words, [sweet as] honey. (2) [859]

I was overjoyed having heard
the Victor praise the nun foremost
of those who make a strong effort,
doing service for the Teacher. (3) [860]

Then worshipping⁴ the Sambuddha,
I aspired to [attain] that place.
The Great Hero approved [of that:]
“Your aspiration will succeed. (4) [861]

In one hundred thousand aeons,
arising in Okkāka's clan,
the one whose name is Gotama
will be the Teacher in the world. (5) [862]

Worthy heir to that one's *Dhamma*,
Dhamma's legitimate offspring,
the one known by the name Soṇā
will be the Teacher's follower.“ (6) [863]

At that time being overjoyed,
as long as life, heart [full of] love,
I attended on the Victor,
the Guide, providing requisites. (7) [864]

Due to that karma done very well,
with intention and [firm] resolve,

¹“Dog,” or a kind of tree, Bodhi Tree of Paduma and Nārada Buddhas, according to BV. An historical nun, remembered as foremost among those who make energetic effort.

²readng *pūjitā* with BJTS (and PTS alt.) for PTS *sajjitā*, which however approximates the same meaning.

³*munivaraṇ*

⁴or “saluting”: *abhivādiya*

discarding [my] human body,
I went to Tāvatiṃsa [then]. (8) [865]

And now, in [my] final rebirth,
I'm born in a millionaire's clan,
rich, prosperous, very wealthy,
in Śrāvastī, best of cities. (9) [866]

When I'd become a young woman,⁵
having gone to a husband's clan,
I was the mother of⁶ ten sons,
very handsome and distinguished. (10) [867]

All of them were comfortable,
delightful in the people's eyes,
brilliant even to enemies,
needless to say, they're loved by⁷ me. (11) [868]

Then, without my desiring it,⁸
he who was my husband went forth
in the Buddha's⁹ dispensation,
surrounded¹⁰ by [those] sons¹¹ [of mine]. (12) [869]

[And] then, alone, I reflected:
"Enough with [this] life [here] for me,¹²
growing old and in misery,
bereft of¹³ [my] husband [and] sons. (13) [870]

I will also go to the place
where [my] husband has [now] arrived."¹⁴
After reflecting in that way,
I went forth into homelessness. (14) [871]

⁵ or "when I had attained puberty:" *yadā ccha yobbanupetā*

⁶ lit., "I gave birth to"

⁷ lit., "of"

⁸ *mayhaṇ akāmāya*, lit., "with my disliking [of it]"

⁹ *devadevassa*, lit., "of the God of Gods" or "the Gods' God's"

¹⁰ or "honored," "being placed in front of"

¹¹ *dasaputta*°, lit., "by the ten sons"

¹² or "I'm fed up with this existence:" *jīvitenaṃlam atthu me*, lit., "Let it be enough with life for me"

¹³ *jīnāya*, BJTS reads *cchattāya* (with much the same meaning)

¹⁴ reading *sampatto* with BJTS for PTS *pasuto* ("pursuing")

And then the nuns left me alone
in the retreat for Buddhist nuns,
going off with the instruction:
“heat up the water [while we’re gone].” (15) [872]

Then bringing water I poured [it]
into a small pot¹⁵[used for that].
After placing [it on the hearth,]
seated, I then kindled my heart. (16) [873]

Seeing the body’s¹⁶ diseased-ness,
essence-less-ness, impermanence,
throwing off all the defilements,
I achieved [my] arahantship. (17) [874]

Then coming [back, those] Buddhist nuns,
asked [me] about the hot water.
Through concentration on the fire,¹⁷
I quickly made the flame ignite. (18) [875]

Astonished, the [nuns] made that fact
audible to the Best Victor.
Hearing [it,] the Lord, overjoyed,
spoke this verse [about me just then:] (19) [876]

“A life lived [only] for one day
undertaken with strong effort,
is better than a century
lived inert, lacking energy.” (20) [877]

The Great Hero was [greatly] pleased
by my exemplary conduct.
That Great Sage said that I’m foremost
of those who make a strong effort. (21) [878]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
all [new] existence is destroyed.
Like elephants with broken chains,
I am living without constraint. (22) [879]

¹⁵*kumbhiyā cchulle*, lit., “into a small *kumbhi*-pot”

¹⁶*khandhe*, lit., “the [five] heaps” or aggregates that make up personal being, the constituent elements of the “I” trapped in *saṃsāra*.

¹⁷lit., “on the fire element”

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) [880]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (24) [881]

Thus indeed Bhikkhunī Soṇā spoke these verses.

The legend of Soṇā Therī is finished.