

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
JONATHAN S. WALTERS,
WHITMAN COLLEGE, 2017

Sukkā

Jonathan S. Walters

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[35. Sukkā¹]

Ninety-one aeons ago the
Leader, whose name was Vipassi,
arose, the One Good to Look At,²
the One with Eyes for Everything. (1) [1214]

I was then in Bandhumatī,
born in an undistinguished clan.
Having heard the Sage's Teaching,
I went forth into homelessness. (2) [1215]

Learned bearer of the Teaching,
good preacher, varied discourser,
I was a [nun] who practiced the
dispensation of the Buddha. (3) [1216]

Then giving many *Dhamma*-talks
with friendship to the populace,
fallen from there I was reborn,
full of splendor, in Tusitā. (4) [1217]

Thirty-one aeons hence, Sikhi,
a Heap of Fire,³ burning with fame,
the Victor, the Best Debater,
[the Buddha,] arose in⁴ the world. (5) [1218]

At that very time going forth,
skilled in Buddha's dispensation,
making the Victor's sayings shine,
I then went to the thirty [gods]. (6) [1219]

The Leader [named] Vessabhu, [too,]
arose thirty-one aeons hence.
And then as well I was the same:⁵
[a Buddhist nun] with vast knowledge. (7) [1220]

Gone forth, a *Dhamma*-bearer, I
made Buddha's⁶ dispensation shine.

¹"White" "Bright" Good," an historical nun, DPPN II: 1173-1174

²*ccharunayano*

³*sikhī*, a play on the meaning of the Buddha's name. It can also mean "peacock." Here *sikhī viya*, lit., "like a heap of fire".

⁴reading *loke* (loc.) with BJTS (and PTS alt.) for PTS *lokaṃ* (acc.)

⁵*tadā pi ccha tath' ev' ahaṃ*

⁶lit., "the Victor's"

Gone to the lovely gods' city,
I experienced great comfort. (8) [1221]

In this [present] lucky aeon,
Kakusandha, Supreme Victor,⁷
arose, the Excellent Leopard,⁸
and then as well I was the same. (9) [1222]

Gone forth, [I] illuminated
the Sage's thought, as long as life.⁹
Fallen from there, I went as far
as the sphere of the thirty [gods]. (10) [1223]

[And] in this very same aeon
the Leader Konāgamana
arose [next,] the Excellent Lamp,¹⁰
Ultimate among all beings. (11) [1224]

At that time too, going forth in
the Neutral One's dispensation,
learned bearer of *Dhamma*, I
made Buddha's¹¹ dispensation shine. (12) [1225]

Also in this [lucky] aeon
Kassapa [Buddha,] Seventh Sage,
arose, the Refuge of the World,¹²
Non-Hostile One,¹³ Ender of Death.¹⁴ (13) [1226]

Gone forth in the dispensation
of that Hero Among Men¹⁵ as well,

⁷*jinuttamo*

⁸*varasaddūlo*. BJTS reads *narasaddūlo*, which is also the reading in *Therī-apadāna* [814] above; PTS alt. gives *narasaraṇo* ("Refuge for Men"). Cf. the note to *Thera-apadāna* [6131] on this rather uncharacteristically loose, and rare but repeated, *Apadāna* Buddha-epithet (or epithets). Does the variation suggest a lack of meaning in the epithet itself (in *Apadāna* the leopard [as *dīpi*] usually appears as part of a list of wild animals, not [unlike say the lion, elephant, swan, bull] as part of a Buddha-epithet)

⁹reading *yathāyukaṃ* with BJTS for PTS *yathāsukhaṃ* ("as much as comfortable" or perhaps "as I pleased")

¹⁰*dīpavaro*

¹¹lit., "the Victor's"

¹²*lokasaraṇo*

¹³*araṇo*, lit., "having no battle," "not adversarial," rhymed in the epithets *lokasaraṇo* and *maṇantaṅgo* that also appear in this verse

¹⁴*maṇantaṅgo*, lit., "gone to the end of death"

¹⁵*naravīra*, or "Heroic Man" "Having the Virility of a Man" ("Masculine One")

[I] learned the good Teaching by heart,
was confident in inquiry, (14) [1227]

very moral, also modest,
[very] skilled in the three trainings,¹⁶
giving many talks on *Dhamma*
with friendship as long as I lived.¹⁷ (15) [1228]

Due to that karma done very well,
with intention and [firm] resolve,
discarding [my] human body,
I went to Tāvātimsa [then]. (16) [1229]

And now, in [my] final rebirth,
in Giribbaja,¹⁸ best city,
[I was] born to rich millionaires,¹⁹
with a huge quantity of gems. (17) [1230]

When [Gotama,] the World's Leader,
surrounded by one thousand monks,
entered [the city,] Rajgir,²⁰ he
was praised by the thousand-eyed [god:]²¹ (18) [1231]

“The Restrained One,²² with former ascetics²³ restrained;
the Liberated One,²⁴ with those liberated;
[who had] the same color as a coin²⁵ made of gold,
the Blessed One entered Rajagaha city.” (19) [1232]²⁶

¹⁶*tisso sikkhā*, i.e., training in morality (*sīla*), wisdom (*paññā*) and meditative states (*samādhi*)

¹⁷reading *hitā* ‘va ‘haṃ with BJTS for PTS *mahāmune* (“O Great Sage”)

¹⁸= Rājagaha, Rajgir, in Bihār

¹⁹lit., “born in a rich clan of millionaires”

²⁰or Giribbaja, here *Rājagaha*

²¹*sahassakkhena*, i.e., Śakra/Indra, king of the gods

²²*danto*, or “Tamed”

²³*purāṇajaṭilehi*, lit., “former matted-haired [ascetics]”

²⁴*vimutto*

²⁵*Siṅgi-nikkha-savaṇṇo*, lit., “having the same color as a golden/”ginger“ coin;” *nikkha* can also be an ornament, or a weight, The thrust, anyway, is that the Buddha was shiny like gold.

²⁶these lines (41 syllables in PTS, 40 syllables in BJTS [which omits the *ccha* after *purāṇajaṭilehi*]) are presented by both PTS and BJTS as a single verse, though they break the two-footed lines differently and I am at a loss for how to understand the “verse” metrically. A quote from some prose text? A verse in more complex meter, garbled in transmission? I have translated into the closest approximation of the latter possibility in *Apadāna*, namely a 12-12-12-12 verse (which would suggest the possible

Seeing the Buddha's majesty,
and hearing him, Heap of Virtues,²⁷
pleasing my heart in the Buddha,
I worshipped²⁸ [him] with all [my] strength. (20) [1233]

At [some] moment after that, in
the presence of Dhammadinnā,²⁹
having gone forth from [my own] home,
I went forth into homelessness. (21) [1234]

I destroyed [all] the defilements
while [my] hair was being cut off.
Going forth, in no long time, I learned
[Buddha's] entire dispensation. (22) [1235]

After that I preached the *Dhamma*
in a huge gathering of folks.
While *Dhamma* was being preached, there
was insight into the Teaching.³⁰ (23) [1236]

Seeing varied thousands of folks
[achieving insight,] astonished,
a spirit,³¹ very pleased by me,
roaming about Rajgir [said this]: (24) [1237]

"Why are these people in Rajgir
acting like nymphs drunk on honey,

loss of seven syllables [in the case of PTS' reading] or eight syllables [in the case of BJTS's reading] sometime comparatively early in the transmission process (since it affects all the extant mss.) In addition to conforming to a verse-form occasionally encountered elsewhere in *Apadāna*, this implicit 12-12-12-12 structure works very nicely for the basic units that then make up the four discrete feet.

²⁷*taṇ...guṇasañcchayaṇ*

²⁸lit., "did pūjā"

²⁹#23, above

³⁰lit., "there was an [achieving of] insight into the *Dhamma* of twenty million." *Dhammābhisamaya*, "insight into the *Dhamma*" or "entry into the *Dhamma*" or "comprehension of the *Dhamma*" or "penetration into the *Dhamma*" refers to the achievement of a firm grasp on the essentials of the Teaching. It is used as a technical term in the account of each Buddha in the *Buddhavaṃsa*, one among many categories of Buddha-achievement enumerated there.

³¹*yakkho*

³²*ye...na*, lit., "those who have not"

³³PTS *payirupāsanti* breaks the meter; BJTS *upāsanti* does not. The two are essentially the same verb, the former with an additional *pari*<*payir*

unless³² they're honoring³³ Sukkā,
[who's] preaching the ambrosial state? (25) [1238]

Methinks the wise are drinking that
irresistible and unmixed
strength-bestower, like travelers
[drink rainwater from] a raincloud.“ (26) [1239]

I've mastered the superpowers
[like] the “divine ear” element.
I'm also a master, Great Sage,³⁴
of the knowledge in others' hearts. (27) [1240]

I remember [my] former lives;
[my] “divine eye” is purified.
All the defilements are destroyed;
[I] will not be reborn again. (28) [1241]

In meaning and in the Teaching,
etymology and preaching,
[this] knowledge of mine was produced
in your presence, O Great Hero. (29) [1242]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
all [new] existence is destroyed.
Like elephants with broken chains,
I am living without constraint. (30) [1243]

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! (31) [1244]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (32) [1245]

Thus indeed the bhikkhunī Sukkā spoke these verses.

The legend of Sukkā Therī³⁵ is finished

³⁴reading *mahāmune* (voc.) with BJTS for PTS *mahāmuni* (nom.)

³⁵This is the BJTS reading. PTS reads *bhikkhunī Sukkā*