

Subhūti

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Subhūti Chapter, the Third

[21. Subhūti]

Close to the Himalayan range
[on] the mountain called Nisabha
my ashram is very well made,
a well-constructed hall of leaves. (1) [813]

Famed ascetic with matted hair,
Kosiyā was [my] name [back then].
Solitary, with no second,
I did live on Nisabha then. (2) [814]

At that time I was not eating
fruits and roots and [freshly-picked] leaves.
I was always subsisting on
the stuff¹ that fell into my bowl. (3) [815]

I disturbed no mode of living,
giving up [my own] life itself.
My own heart was satisfied as
I rejected [all] harmful ways. (4) [816]

Whenever there arose in me
a mind heated up by passion,
reflecting on it by myself,
remaining calm I would tame it: (5) [817]

“You’re aroused in what’s arousing,
you are defiled in what defiles,
you fool yourself in foolish things
[so] you should leave the forest [now]. (6) [818]

This is the habitation of
the pure [and] stainless ascetics.
Do not sully that purity;
you ought to leave the forest [now]. (7) [819]

Having become a homeless one,
you always get what is fitting.
Don’t you transgress against them both;
you ought to leave the forest [now]. (8) [820]

¹I am unclear how to take paṇḍu (“yellowish”) in this compound. The cty understands it to mean leaves that fell from trees by themselves, and this would correspond to the usage of paṇḍu as “withered” in some compounds, but I leave it ambiguous, as is the Pali.

The wood left from a funeral pyre
is not made use of anywhere:
in the village or the jungle
it's not approved as firewood. (9) [821]

You are just like that firebrand,
neither layman nor [yet] wise man.
Today you've departed from both
[so] you should leave the forest [now]. (10) [822]

What then would that produce for you?
To what does this give birth for you?
Giving up² my practice of faith
results in so much idleness. (11) [823]

The wise are going to despise you
as a householder [dislikes] dirt.³
Sages, having rooted [you] out
will always cast blame upon you. (12) [824]

The wise ones will speak out against
you leaving the dispensation.
You'll receive no co-residence;
what are you going to live on [then]? (13) [825]

A strong elephant will approach
an elephant who's thrice-rutting,⁴
a tusker sixty years of age
and drive him away from the herd. (14) [826]

Living in exile from the herd
he's not happy nor is he pleased.
Suffering with [his] mind depressed,
full of remorse, he will tremble.⁵ (15) [827]

Just like that the cruel ascetics
are [surely] going to throw you out.
Being exiled by them you won't
feel happiness or pleasure [then]. (16) [828]

If by day or by night you are
pierced through with the arrow of grief,

²reading *jahasi* ("giving up," "abandoning," BJTS) for *pāhisi* ("sent," PTS)

³or "shit," *asuciṃ* = impurity, excrement. Is "shit" too strong a word for a translation of *Apadāna*? Does "asuci" carry that strong a connotation? Does "dirt" carry a strong enough one?

⁴i.e., showing their rut in their eyes, ears, and genitals. See *cty*, p. 288.

⁵reading *pajjhāyanto pavadhethi* (BJTS) for *ojjhāyanto padhāvati* (PTS).

[then] you will burn with pain just like
the tusker exiled from the herd. (17) [829]

Just as a pretty iron tool
is not taken out⁶ anywhere,
so you, without moral restraint,
won't be invited anywhere. (18) [830]

Even if you're dwelling at home
what are you going to live on [there]?
You do not have a heap of wealth⁷
from your mother and [your] father. (19) [831]

Having done [hard] work by oneself
[much] sweat flows out of the body.
Thus earning a living at home,
you won't think it [so] excellent."⁸ (20) [832]

In that way I carried on there
[whenever] my mind was defiled.
Making varied *Dhamma*-speeches
I warded off my evil heart. (21) [833]

While I was living in this way
dwelling [so] very thoughtfully
[fully] thirty thousand years passed
in my forest [hermitage there]. (22) [834]

Seeing my love of thoughtfulness
[in] seeking [for] the supreme goal,
Padumuttara the Buddha
[then] came to the place where I was. (23) [835]

⁶the texts disagree on the reading of this verb, which undergirds the analogy between the failed ascetic and the iron tool (*kūṭaṃ*, a kind of hammer); it is in the 3rd person here, and the 2nd person in the fourth foot. I follow PTS but read the verb *yāyati* rather loosely to mean both "taken out for use" (as in the hammer) and "taken out for a meal" (as in the ascetic); the verb itself just means "go". In this reading, the beauty (*jātarūpa*) of the tool would be the reason it isn't taken out/used, and would imply that like that the ascetic looks good but isn't actually useful. The alternative *jhāyati* ("meditates," PTS alt.) would compare the failed ascetic to an insentient thing, which is also possible, though it's not then clear why the text stipulates that it's a beautiful hammer. The BJTS reading is *jhāpeti*, "set on fire," "reduce to ashes;" while it is true that the iron hammer wouldn't burn, it's not clear what this would mean vis-a-vis the ascetic (who, we're told in v. [17], will be burning), unless it be that no one would perform his funeral. The PTS reading *yāyati* is especially to be preferred given the focus on place in *kattha ci* ("anywhere," repeated in the second and fourth feet).

⁷*niciṭaṃ dhanaṃ*, the PTS reading. The BJTS (and PTS alt) reading is *nihitaṃ dhanaṃ* "renounced wealth," in which case the translation would be: "you do not have the maternal and paternal wealth which you renounced."

⁸lit., "it will not be liked by you as excellent"

The Bright Hue of Wild Mangosteen,⁹
 Incomparable,¹⁰ Unmeasurable,¹¹
 the Buddha, Unrivaled in Form,¹²
 walked back and forth [across] the sky.¹³ (24) [836]

Like a regal *sal* tree in bloom,
 like lightening inside of a cloud,
 the Buddha, Peerless in Knowledge,
 walked back and forth [across] the sky. (25) [837]

Not frightened, like the king of beasts;
 prideful like an elephant-king;
 playful as a tiger-king he
 walked back and forth [across] the sky. (26) [838]

Shining like a coin¹⁴ made of gold
 [or even] like glowing embers,
 like a wish-fulfilling gem¹⁵ he
 walked back and forth [across] the sky. (27) [839]

Like Mount Kailās¹⁶ in purity,
 like the moon on the fifteenth day,¹⁷
 like the [blazing] midday sun he
 walked back and forth [across] the sky. (28) [840]

Seeing him walk across the sky
 at that time I thought in this way:
 “Is this creature some sort of god?
 If not, is this one [just] a man? (29) [841]

I’ve never heard of nor have seen
 a man as great as this one [seems].
 Surely he knows [secret] mantras;
 [I think] this must be the Teacher.” (30) [842]

Having thought about it like that

⁹lit., “radiant with the color of a *Timbarūsaka* [tree]”. The tree is *diospyros embryopteris*, Sinh. *timbiri*. The cty. specifies that the color is that of gold.

¹⁰*anupamo*

¹¹*appameyyo*

¹²*rūpen’asadiso*

¹³lit., he walked back and forth in the sky at that time.” I have ignored the *tadā* in most of the instances of this repeated phrase, *metri causa*.

¹⁴*siṅgī-nikkha-suvaṇṇa-ābbho*; *nikkha* can also be an ornament, or a weight, The thrust, anyway, is that the Buddha was shiny like gold.

¹⁵*jotirasa*, Pali-Sinhala-Ingirīsi dictionary calls it a wishing jewel, *cintāmāṇīkyaya*, i.e., a gem that grants wishes.

¹⁶reading *visuddha-kelāsa-nibho* (BJTS) for *visuddha-kelāsa-ṇ-ṇibho* (PTS).

¹⁷i.e., when it is full, *puṇṇamāse va candimā*

I brought pleasure to [my] own heart.
 And I then gathered together
 various flowers and perfumes. (31) [843]

Spreading out a seat of flowers
 I [then] spoke these words [to Buddha],
 Good-Hearted One, the Mind's Delight,
 the Charioteer of Men, the Top: (32) [844]

“O Hero, I've spread out this seat
 which is a fitting one for you.
 Bringing laughter to my [own] heart
 please sit on this seat of flowers.” (33) [845]

The Blessed One did sit down there
 unfrightened like a lion[-king],
 [and] the Buddha [remained] a week
 on that excellent floral seat. (34) [846]

Worshipping [him] I stood [right there]
 for [all] those seven nights and days.
 Rising up from meditation
 the Teacher, Best One in the World, (35) [847]

declaring my karmic [result]
 [then] did speak these words [to me there]:
 “Practice Buddha-recollection,¹⁸
 [it's] the supreme meditation. (36) [848]

Cultivating this mindfulness
 will be fulfilling mentally.
 For thirty thousand aeons you
 will delight in the world of gods. (37) [849]

Eighty times as the king of gods
 you will exercise divine rule.
 A thousand times you're going to be
 wheel-turning king of a country. (38) [850]

[And you will have] much local rule
 innumerable by counting.
 You'll experience all of that:
 fruit of Buddha-recollection. (39) [851]

Transmigrating from birth to birth
 you will receive many riches.

¹⁸*buddhanussati*

In wealth never deficiency:
fruit of Buddha-recollection. (40) [852]

In one hundred thousand aeons,
arising in Okkāka's clan,
the one whose name is Gotama
will be the Teacher in the world. (41) [853]

Discarding eight hundred million
[and] many slaves [and] workers [too],
you'll renounce in the great Teaching
of Gotama the Blessed One. (42) [854]

Satisfying the Sambuddha,
Gotama, the Bull of Śākyas,
you will be known as Subhūti,
a follower of the Teacher. (43) [855]

Seated in the [monks'] assembly
he'll fix you in two foremost spots:
in the group of gift-receivers,
and also of forest-dwellers." (44) [856]

Having said this, the Sambuddha
who was named for the lotus flower,
the Hero¹⁹ flew into the sky
just like a swan-king in the air. (45) [857]

[Thus] instructed by the World-Chief
[and] having praised the Thus-Gone-One,
satisfied I always practiced
supreme Buddha-recollection. (46) [858]

Due to that karma done very well
with intention and [firm] resolve,
discarding [my] human body
I went to Tāvatiṃsa [then]. (47) [859]

Eighty times as the king of gods
I did exercise divine rule,
and [too] a thousand times I was
a wheel-turning monarch [then]. (48) [860]

[And I did have] much local rule
innumerable by counting.
I experienced supreme success:
fruit of Buddha-recollection. (49) [861]

¹⁹BJTS (and PTS alt.) reads *dhīro* ("the wise one")

Transmigrating from birth to birth
I did receive many riches.
In wealth never deficiency:
fruit of Buddha-recollection. (50) [862]

In the hundred thousand aeons
since I performed that [good] karma,
I've come to know no bad rebirth;
fruit of Buddha-recollection. (51) [863]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (52) [864]

Thus indeed Venerable Subhūti Thera spoke these verses.

The legend of Subhūti Thera is finished.