

Bakkula

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[393. {396.}¹ Bakkula²]

In the Himalayan region,
there's a mountain named Sobhita.
My well-constructed hermitage
was built by [my] own students [there]. (1) [3758]

There were many canopies there,³
and flowering Chinese chaste trees.⁴
There were many wood-apple⁵ trees,⁶
and *jīvajīvaka*⁷ in bloom. (2) [3759]

There were many *nigguṇḍi*⁸ trees,⁹
jujube,¹⁰ also gooseberry,¹¹
*phārusaka*¹² and bottle-gourds¹³
and white lotus¹⁴ flowers in bloom. (3) [3760]

There was *ālakā* and bel¹⁵ there,
plantain,¹⁶ and also citron¹⁷ trees;

¹*Apadāna* numbers provided in {fancy brackets} correspond to the BJTS edition, which contains more individual poems than does the PTS edition dictating the main numbering of this translation.

²“Two-families Bi-Kin” (see DPPN II:261). Also spelled Bākula, Vakkula. A historical monk, renounced at the age of eighty and attained arahantship on the eighth day. As a child, swallowed by a fish and later recovered from its belly. Remembered for providing medicines to Buddhas and monks in previous lifetimes; named the best in good health by the Buddha of this era. Also remembered as a monk who practiced asceticism without preaching it to others. Subject of the *Bakkula-sutta* (M.iii.124ff), in which he describes his eighty years as a monk (he dies at the age of 160).

³reading *tattha* with BJTS for PTS *tatthā* (presumably a typo)

⁴*sindhuvārīta*, *Vitex negundo*, a.k.a. Horshoe vitex, Five-leaved chaste tree

⁵reading *kapitthā* with BJTS for PTS *kapitṭhaṇ*, *Feronia elephantum*, Sinh. *divul*

⁶lit., “trees there,” reading *tattha* with BJTS for PTS *tatthā* (presumably a typo)

⁷at [3321] BJTS treats this as the name of a special type of jak-fruit. It means, “life-lifer,” also (as *jīvaṇjīvaka*) the name of a bird (a type of pheasant, according to RD) whose call is similar to the sound “*jīvaṇ jīvaṇ*.”

⁸a kind of tree, *Vitex nigunda*. Sinh: *nika*

⁹lit., “trees there,” reading *tattha* with BJTS for PTS *tatthā* (presumably a typo)

¹⁰*badarā*, *Zizyphus jujuba*. RD: “not unlike a crabapple in appearance & taste, very astringent, used for medicine A i.130=Pug 32; A iii.76; Vin iv.76; J iii.21; DhsA 320 (cited among examples of acrid flavours); VvA 186.”

¹¹reading *badarāmalakāni* with BJTS for PTS *badarā malakāni*. *Āmalaka* = Sinhala *nelli*, *phyllanthus emblica*, emblic myrobalan, Indian gooseberry.

¹²Sinh. *borālu damanu*, a species of *Eugenia*.

¹³*alābū* = Sinh. *puhul* (ash-pumpkin) or *labu* (gourd). Cone specifies that it is bottle-gourd, *Lagenaria vulgaris*. Also spelt *alāpū*

¹⁴*puṇḍarīkā*

¹⁵*beluvā* = *Aegle marmelos*, *beli geḍiya*, bael, bel, Bengal quince; *bilva* or *vilva* tree; *billā*

¹⁶*kadali*

¹⁷*mātuluṅgakā*, elsewhere *mātuluṅgiya*

there was lots of sugarcane¹⁸ there,
arjuna¹⁹ and *piyaṅguka*.²⁰ (4) [3761]

Neem,²¹ *salalā*,²² yellow
cheesewoods,²³ banyan,²⁴ wood-apple trees,²⁵
my hermitage was one like that;
I lived [there] with [my] students then. (5) [3762]

Anomadassi, Blessed One,
the Self-Become One, World-Leader,
looking for a secluded place,
[then] came up to my hermitage. (6) [3763]

When the Great Hero had approached,²⁶
Anomadassi of Great Fame,
suddenly [some] internal pain,²⁷
arose for the Lord of the World. (7) [3764]

Wandering in the hermitage,
I saw the Leader of the World.
Having approached the Sambuddha,
the Eyeful One, he of Great Fame,
and having seen his deportment,²⁸
I diagnosed him at that time:
“without a doubt [some] illness has
been born [inside] of the Buddha.” (8-9) [3765-3766]

¹⁸*mahānāmā*. Following BJTS Sinhala gloss as *uk*, sugarcane, *Saccharum officinarum* (*Gram.*)

¹⁹*ajjuṇā* (a.k.a. *kakudha*, Sinhala *kumbuk gasa*, *kubuk*, *Terminalia arjuna*) is an impressively large, shade-giving tree that thrives on the edges of tanks and lakes. PTS spells the term *ajjunā*.

²⁰*piyaṅgukā*. RD: “[cp. Vedic *priyangu*] 1. panic seed, *Panicum Italicum* Vv 537; J i.39; PvA 283. Mixed with water and made into a kind of gruel (*piyaṅgūḍaka*) it is used as an emetic J i.419. See also *kangu*. — 2. a medicinal plant, *Priyangu* J v.420. BJTS glosses it *puvaṅgu*, Botanical dictionary = *priyaṅgu* = *ruk gasa*, *Myristica Hersfieldia* (*Myris.*), “a lofty tree...It produces fragrant flowers and seeds from its trunk.”

²¹PTS *kosumbhā*, BJTS *kosambā*, also spelt *kosambhā*; BJTS Sinh. gloss here = *kohomba*, neem or margosa tree, *Azadirachta indica*

²²PTS *salalā*, BJTS *salalā*, BJTS Sinh. gloss = *hora* = “large timber tree yielding resin and oil, *Dipterocarpus zeylanicus* (*Dipterocarp.*)” (Bot. dict.)

²³*nīpa* = Sinhala *kolom*, *nauclea orientalis*; also called Leichhardt tree

²⁴*nigrodhā* = Sinh. *nuga*, RD: the banyan or Indian fig-tree, *Ficus Indica*; Bot. dict.: milky fig tree, *Ficus altissima* (*Urti.*)

²⁵*kapitthanā* = *kapittha*, *kapitṭha* (already mentioned in v. 2 [3759] above), *Feronia elephantum*, Sinh. *divul*

²⁶reading *upetaṃhi mahāvīre anomadassimahāyase*, gen. abs. construction, with BJTS, for PTS *upetaṃca mahāvīram Anomadassi-mahāyasaṃ* (accusatives, unclear how the grammar would then work unless we assume an accusative absolute construction)

²⁷*vātābādho*, “a disease of the wind,” one of the three humors in classical Indian (including Buddhist) medical traditions.

²⁸*iriyaṅ cāpi disvāna*

Wishing to practice medicine,
I ran back²⁹ to the hermitage.
In the presence of my students,
I then addressed [all my] students. (10) [3767]

All the students were respectful;
having listened to what I said,
they assembled in one group for
me, who respected the Teacher. (11) [3768]

Having quickly scaled a mountain,
I fetched³⁰ all of the healing herbs.³¹
Making [them] into a liquid,³²
I gave [it] to the Best Buddha. (12) [3769]

When the Great Hero consumed³³ [it],
the Omniscient One, World-Leader,
quickly [that] illness³⁴ was suppressed³⁵
for the Well-Gone-One, the Great Sage. (13) [3770]

Having seen [his] distress relieved,³⁶
Anomadassi of Great Fame,
after sitting on his own seat,
spoke these verses [to us back then]: (14) [3771]

“This one who gave me medicine
and [thereby] relieved my disease,
I shall relate details of him;
[all of] you listen to my words: (15) [3772]

For one hundred thousand aeons
he’ll delight in the world of gods.

²⁹*khippam assamam āgacchiṅ*, lit., “quickly I came to the hermitage”

³⁰reading *ahās’ ahaṃ* (“I fetched, gathered, took, killed,” *ahāsi* = 1st person sing. aorist of *harati*) with BJTS for PTS *akās’ ahaṅ*, “I did,” “I made”

³¹*sabbosadham*. Though not stipulated, the sense may be “all the medicinal herbs required for the medicine I wished to make for the Buddha,” rather than every medicinal herb that exists, though either interpretation is possible and I have tried to leave the translation as open as the Pāli.

³²*pāṇiyayogaṅ katvāna*, lit., something like “having prepared them through liquifaction” or “making them drinkable.” He takes the herbs and prepares them into a liquid medicine for the Buddha (presumably by cleaning, chopping, boiling, squeezing then filtering them).

³³*paribhutte*, “was one who made use of,” i.e., who took the medicine.

³⁴*vāto*, lit., “wind”. The term invokes the illness itself, “a disease of the wind,” which would involve an imbalance (usually an excess) of that humor over the other two (bile and phlegm). The cure would thus involve eliminating or “suppressing” *vāta* to restore the healthy balance of the three humors.

³⁵*vūpasami* (fr. *vūpasammati*)

³⁶PTS reads *passaddhadarathaṅ disvā*, BJTS reads *passaddhaṃ darathaṃ disvā*

When instruments³⁷ are sounded there,
this one constantly will be thrilled. (16) [3773]

Coming to the world of humans,
incited by [his] wholesome roots,
a thousand times he'll be a king,
a king who turns the wheel [of law]. (17) [3774]

In the fifty-fifth aeon [hence]
he'll be the king³⁸ named Anoma,³⁹
lord of the grove of rose-apples,⁴⁰
victorious on [all] four sides.⁴¹ (18) [3775]

A wheel-turning king with great strength,
possessor of the seven gems,
he will exercise sovereignty,
making even the heavens shake.⁴² (19) [3776]

[Whether] born human or divine,
he'll be one with little disease.
Throwing away [his] possessions,⁴³
he'll transcend⁴⁴ illness in the world. (20) [3777]

Aeons beyond measure from now,
arising in Okkāka's clan,
the one whose name is Gotama
will be the Teacher in the world. (21) [3778]

Worthy heir to that one's *Dhamma*,
Dhamma's legitimate offspring,
knowing well all the defilements,
he'll reach nirvana, undefiled." (22) [3779]

Burning up [all his] defilements
he will cross the flood of clinging.
He'll be the Teacher's follower,
[the monk] whose name is Bakkula. (23) [3780]

³⁷*turiye*, musical instruments

³⁸lit., "kṣatriyan"

³⁹"Not Inferior," "Superior One"

⁴⁰*jambusaṇḍa* = *jambudīpa* = India, the South Asian continent

⁴¹*caturanto vijitāvi*, "possessed of conquest of the four quarters," a supreme imperial overlord
⁴²reading *tāvatiṃse pi khobetvā* (lit., "having shaken the thirty-three gods/[those in] the *tāvatiṃsa* heaven") with BJTS for PTS *tāvatiṃse 'to khobetvā* (having shaken from [a starting point?] in *Tāvatiṃsa*")

⁴³*pariggahaṇ vivajjetvā*. *Pariggaha* can include, or specifically mean, not only his wealth, but also his wife.

⁴⁴*tarissati*, lit., "get through" "overcome" "cross beyond"

Having come to know all of this,
 Gotama, Bull of the Śākyas,
 seated in the monks' Assembly
 will place [him] in that foremost place."⁴⁵ (24) [3781]

Anomadassi, Blessed One,
 the Self-Become One, World-Leader,
 looking for a secluded place,
 came to my hermitage [back then]. (25) [3782]

With all the healing herbs I served
 the Great Hero who had approached,
 Omniscient One, the World-Leader,
 [feeling well-]pleased by [my] own hands. (26) [3783]

I can't even [start] to spend the
 harvest⁴⁶ of that seed well-planted,⁴⁷
 that karma I did well for him,
 well done by me so long ago.⁴⁸ (27) [3784]

My gains were well-obtained be me
 who saw the Leader [of the World];
 through the remainder of that deed,
 I realized the deathless state. (28) [3785]

Having come to know all of that,
 Gotama, Bull of the Śākyas,
 seated in the monks' Assembly
 [has] placed in that foremost place. (29) [3786]

In the vast number of aeons
 since I did that karma back then,
 I've come to know no bad rebirth:
 that is the fruit of medicine. (30) [3787]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
 all [new] existence is destroyed.
 All defilements are exhausted;
 now there will be no more rebirth. (31) [3788]

My being in Buddha's presence

⁴⁵Bakkula was foremost among those of good health (DPPN II: 262, citing A.1.25; "for a problem connected with this, see Mil. 215ff.), and this verse apparently refers to that. Thus the "all of that" discerned by Gotama would be "all of that experience with medicine;" the "foremost place" would be "foremost among those of good health"

⁴⁶lit., "success," "achievement," "result"

⁴⁷lit., "[planted] in a good field," *sukhette bījasampadā*

⁴⁸*tadā*, lit., "at that time"

was a very good thing for me.
The three knowledges are attained;
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (32) [3789]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (33) [3790]

Thus indeed Venerable Bakkula Thera spoke these verses.

The legend of Bakkula Thera is finished.