

Bhaddā-Kāpilāni

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[27. Bhaddā-Kāpilāni]

The Victor Padumuttara
was One With Eyes for everything.
[That] Leader [of the World] was born
one hundred thousand aeons hence. (1) [882]

There was then in Haṃsavatī,
a leader¹ known as Videha,
a millionaire with many gems;
I was the wife of him [back then]. (2) [883]

Once, accompanied by servants,
he went up to the Human Sun,
[and] listened to Buddha's Teaching,
causing all suffering to end. (3) [884]

The Leader praised the follower
who was top in austerities;²
hearing, he gave alms for a week
to the Buddha, the Neutral One. (4) [885]

Bowing [his] head at [Buddha's] feet,
he aspired to that [foremost] place,
causing his retinue to smile.
Right then³ [that] Bull Among People (5) [886]

having pitied the millionaire,
spoke these verses [aloud to him]:
“You will attain the wished-for state;
o son you'll achieve nirvana. (6) [887]

In one hundred thousand aeons,
arising in Okkāka's clan,
the one whose name is Gotama
will be the Teacher in the world. (7) [888]

Worthy heir to that one's Dhamma,
Dhamma's legitimate offspring,

¹reading *nāyako* (BJTS) for *nāmako* (PTS, “one whose name”). While the phrase *nāma nāmako* (“named with the name...”) is very common in *Apadāna* (I have tended in my translations to reduce the redundancy by taking it simply as “named” or “known as,” but sometimes have given “known by the name,” as meter has allowed), and the PTS reading may therefore be correct, BJTS here follows the *Therīgāthā-Aṭṭhakathā* version of the text which may well bear earlier witness; I anyway like the juxtaposition of the husband as an economic leader with Padumuttara Buddha, the Leader [of the World] (also *nāyako*).

²lit., “who was foremost among those who bespeak ascetic [practices].”

³reading *tadā hi* (BJTS) for *tadā āha* (“then he said,” PTS).

the one whose name is Kassapa
will be the Teacher's follower." (8) [889]

Gladdened after having heard that,
as long as [he] lived [he] then served
with requisites the Victor, Guide,
with a heart that was [full] of love. (9) [890]

Lighting up the Dispensation,
Crushing the Dirty Heretics,
Instructing those who Could be Taught,⁴
he passed on⁵ with his followers. (10) [891]

When that World-Chief reached nirvana,
assembling [his] kinsmen and friends
to do pūjā to the Teacher,
with them [he then] had constructed (11) [892]

a stupa which was made of gems,
rising up seven leagues [in height,]
which blazed forth just as does the sun;
like a regal *sal* tree in bloom. (12) [893]

There [at the stupa,] he had made
seven hundred thousand [fine] bowls,
with the seven types of gemstone,
they shined brightly like reeds on fire. (13) [894]

[After that] he had lamps lit there,
having filled [them] with perfumed oil
to do pūjā to the Great Sage,
who pitied every living being. (14) [895]

He had seven hundred thousand
"pots of plenty" constructed [there],
which were [all] filled up with gemstones
to do pūjā to the Great Seer. (15) [896]

A gold festoon work was raised up,
surrounded by sixty-four jars;⁶
it shined brilliantly with color,
like the day-maker⁷ in autumn. (16) [897]

Arches constructed of gemstones

⁴*veneyye*, lit., "those who were to be instructed".

⁵*nibbuto*, i.e., attained nirvana.

⁶lit., "in the middle of eight [times] eight large jars (*kumbhi*)."

⁷*divākara*, the sun.

at the four gateways are splendid.
Planks that are made out of gemstones,
raised up beautiful, are splendid. (17) [898]

Ornaments, exquisitely made,
encircle [that stupa,] shining.
Banners are raised up [in the sky];
[fashioned out of] gemstones, they shine. (18) [899]

That very red shrine made of gems,
well-built and variegated,⁸
shined excessively with color,
like the sun⁹ does in the evening. (19) [900]

The stupa had three terraces;
one he filled with yellow ointment,¹⁰
one with red-colored arsenic,¹¹
one with black collyrium paste.¹² (20) [901]

Having performed pūjā like that,
lovely, for the Excellent One,¹³
he gave the monks' community
alms, much as he could, his whole life.¹⁴ (21) [902]

Along with that millionaire I,
as long as I lived [also] did
those merit-filled deeds thoroughly;
[and] with [him] I [had] good rebirths. (22) [903]

Experiencing happiness,¹⁵
both as a human and a god,
I was reborn along with him,
like a shadow with the body. (23) [904]

The Leader known as Vipassi

⁸the mss. tradition disagrees on the reading of this term, and this translation is only provisional, going with the PTS (*cittaṃ*, “heart, mind”) but taking it in its rarer meaning of “variegated.” BJTS reads *cetaṃ*, more unambiguously “heart, mind,” but I don’t see how the grammar works with that as an adjective modifying *cetiyaṃ* (shrine, stupa), unless we read it to mean “thought out” or something along those lines. BJTS alternative is *citakāṃ*, “funeral pile,” redundant with *cetiyaṃ*, while PTS alternative is *citaṃ* (“heaped up,” a possibility) or *dhitaṃ* (?).

⁹lit., “day-maker,” as above.

¹⁰*haritāla*.

¹¹*manosilā*.

¹²*añjana*.

¹³*varadhāri*, lit., “Bearer of Excellence” or “the One Clothed in Excellence”.

¹⁴lit., “for as long as he lived”.

¹⁵here the term *sampatti* (happiness, success, attainment) is in the plural, but to avoid the awkward “happinesses” I translate in the singular. Cf. *Therāpadāna* [1729] for a parallel half-verse.

arose ninety-one aeons ago,
[Buddha,] Delightful to the Eye,
One With Insight into All Things. (24) [905]

Then he¹⁶ [lived] in Bandhumatī,
a brahmin known for excellence,¹⁷
rich in scripture and religion,¹⁸
but¹⁹ very poor in terms of wealth. (25) [906]

And at that time, of the same mind,
I was his brahmin woman [wife].
Once that excellent twice-born man
met with the Sage who was So Great, (26) [907]

seated ‘midst the population,
preaching the state of deathlessness.
Hearing the Dhamma, overjoyed,
he gave his own cloak [to that Sage]. (27) [908]

Going home in a single cloth,
he spoke these [words] to me [just then]:
“Take joy in this great good karma,
the cloak given to the Buddha.” (28) [909]

Then clasping hands together I,
well-satisfied, did take delight:
“Husband, this cloak is gifted well
to the Best Buddha, Neutral One.” (29) [910]

Being happy and [well-]prepared,
transmigrating from birth to birth
he was the king, lord of the earth,
in lovely Benares city. (30) [911]

I was the chief queen of that [king],
supreme in his troupe of women.
I was extremely dear to him,
due to past love for [my] husband.²⁰ (31) [912]

Having seen eight Lonely Leaders²¹

¹⁶lit., “this one,” i.e., the millionaire reborn, a later rebirth precursor of Kassapa. Reading *tadā* ‘yam (BJTS) for *tadā hi* (“at that very time,” PTS)

¹⁷lit., “approved of [or agreed upon] as excellent.”

¹⁸reading *aḍḍho satthāgamenā* ‘si (BJTS) for *aḍḍho santo gamenāsi* (“being rich through going” [?], PTS)

¹⁹lit., “and”.

²⁰reading *bhattuno* (BJTS) for *uttariṇ* (“besides,” PTS).

²¹*paccekanāyake*, i.e., *pacceka-buddhas*.

going about on [their] alms-rounds,
 he, having become overjoyed,
 gave very costly alms to them. (32) [913]

Again having invited [them,]
 having made a gem pavilion,
 gathering bowls made by [gold-]smiths,
 [as too] a tray of solid²² gold,
 he then offered to all of them,
 who'd gotten up on golden seats,²³
 an almsgiving [most opulent,]
 [feeling well-] pleased by [his] own hands. (33-34) [914-915]

I gave that very almsgiving
 with the Kāsi²⁴ king [way] back then.
 Again I was reborn in a
 village outside the Kāsi gates.²⁵ (35) [916]

He²⁶ was happy with his brothers,
 in a wealthy clan of fam'lies.
 I was the eldest brother's wife,
 a woman who fulfilled her vows.²⁷ (36) [917]

Having seen a Lonely Buddha,
 he who was my youngest brother,
 gave his²⁸ portion to [that Buddha];
 when he arrived I told [him] that. (37) [918]

He did not praise that almsgiving,
 so having taken back that food
 from Buddha, I gave it to him;
 again he gave him it [himself]. (38) [919]

Then having thrown away that food,
 enraged,²⁹ I [took back] Buddha's bowl

²²lit., "of gold indeed".

²³there is divergence in the manuscripts on this line. I read *soṇṇāsanopaviṭṭhānaṃ* (BJTS) for *sovaṇṇāsane paviṭṭhānaṃ* ("who'd entered onto a golden seat," PTS); the meaning is anyway clear, that within the gem pavilion seats had been made of gold for the Lonely Buddhas, and the alms-food was served to them while they were sitting thereon.

²⁴i.e., Benares.

²⁵lit., "in Benares, in a village outside the gates"

²⁶Kassapa's next rebirth precursor.

²⁷or, a woman devoted to her husband

²⁸the eldest brother's

²⁹BJTS (also PTS alt.) reads *duṭṭhā* (angry, wicked) for *ruṭṭhā* (angry, enraged); I follow PTS here in taking the term to refer to her anger in the moment more than the sort of larger bad character implied by *duṭṭhā*. The text does not specify why she becomes so angry (which is the main point

[a second time,] filled it with mud,
[and] gave it to that Neutral One. (39) [920]

And right when he received those alms,
rotten and lacking purity,³⁰
his mind was equally happy;³¹
seeing [that,] I was very moved.³² (40) [921]

Again [I] took [that] bowl [from him],
[and] cleaned [it] with scented perfume.
With [my] mind [then] full of pleasure,
I gave him ghee respectfully.³³ (41) [922]

In whichever place I'm reborn,
because [I gave] alms, I'm gorgeous;
through [giving] Buddha tasteless food,
my breath has a horrible stench. (42) [923]

Again when Buddha³⁴ Kassapa's
stupa was being completed,
delighted, I [then] gave [for it]
an excellent tile made of gold. (43) [924]

Through four lifetimes having applied
scented [substances] to that tile,

of either reading); it assumes that its audience will immediately understand the reason. I imagine something like this: the husband expresses his displeasure in terms that implicate the wife — “I come home for lunch and there's nothing for me to eat” — so she does something unthinkable in the context of *Apadāna* (and Theravāda Buddhist culture), taking alms back from a Buddha so her husband can eat the food himself. When he then turns around and gives the food back to the Buddha again, he reveals that his intention was not to get fed, but rather to earn the merit for himself (and he responds to what may have already been a tense situation, for example if the initial return of the food struck him as an already-angry insult on the part of his wife, perhaps because she made a sarcastic comment such as, “Fear not, *here's* your lunch”). She — who presumably cooked the meal in the first place, who has now been chastised for a lapse in her domestic responsibility, who turns a merit-making (*puñña-kamma*) opportunity into an act of demerit (*pāpa-kamma*) in order to rectify that lapse, and who then realizes that the only lapse was in her husband's greediness for merit even at her expense — would have had plenty of cause to become enraged, especially if the return of the food had already been a volley in a marital spat.

³⁰reading *amejjhe* (“impure,” BJTS, PTS alt.) for *apace* (“uncooked,” PTS).

³¹BJTS reads *samacittamukhaṃ* (“his face [showed] the same mind”) for PTS *samacittasukhaṃ*, the reading I prefer here even though both readings amount to the same thing: the Paccekabuddha shows no change of face, no difference of opinion, whether receiving a bowl of mud or a nice home-cooked meal. This equanimity, of course, is characteristic of Buddhas and other Awakened beings.

³²reading *saṃvijjīṃ bhusaṃ* (BJTS, PTS alt) for *mahāsaṅghaṃ cajiṃ bhusaṃ* (“I let loose the many [in the?] great community,” PTS).

³³reading *sakkarāṃ* (alt. *sakkāraṃ*) *adaṃ*, “I gave with proper reverence” “I gave hospitably” with PTS'; BJTS reads *sakkharaṃ adaṃ*, “I gave gravel” (!).

³⁴lit., “Hero,” but I translate “Buddha” to avoid any confusion of this previous Buddha with Bhaddā-Kāpilāni's present-life husband Mahā-Kassapa.

every one of [my] limbs was freed
from the defect of bad odor. (44) [925]

Having made seven thousand bowls,
[each adorned] with the seven gems
and filled with clarified butter,
placing [in them] a thousand wicks,³⁵ (45) [926]

with a mind that was very pleased,
I proceeded to light [them all,]
and laid [them] out³⁶ in seven rows,
to do pūjā to the World's Lord (46) [927]

and at that time especially
I had the share in that merit.
Again among the Kāsians³⁷
he was Sumitta, well-known sage.³⁸ (47) [928]

I was [the Sage Sumitta's] wife,
happy, joyful and [much] beloved.
And then he gave [some] Lonely Ones
a massive cloak [to use for robes]. (48) [929]

[I] also shared in that [merit,]
approving of that great alms gift.
Again in the Kāsi country³⁹
he was reborn, a Koliyan.⁴⁰ (49) [930]

And then, along with five hundred
of the sons of the Koliyans,
he attended⁴¹ upon Lonely
Buddhas, five hundred [in number]. (50) [931]

Satisfying⁴² [them] for three months
he gave⁴³ [those Buddhas] the three robes.
I was then the [Koliyan's] wife,

³⁵PTS (and BJTS alt) gives *vaṭṭiṇi*, BJTS *vaṭṭiyo* for the plural of *vaṭṭi*, "wick".

³⁶PTS reads *ṭhāpayiṇ* ("I laid out"); BJTS reads *ṭhāpayi*, "laid out." Following PTS I take the term verbally.

³⁷i.e., people of Benares.

³⁸BJTS reads *iti* (quotation marker) for *isi* (sage), hence would have "He was well known as Sumitta".

³⁹i.e., the environs of Benares

⁴⁰lit., "in the clan of the Koliyas".

⁴¹BJTS reads *samupaṭṭhahi* for *samupaṭṭhayi* (PTS), but the meaning is clear.

⁴²reading *tappayitvāna* (BJTS) for *vāsayitvāna* ("having perfumed" "having cleaned," PTS).

⁴³reading BJTS *adāsi* for PTS *adaṅsu*, "they gave," though the latter would also be an acceptable reading since the text specifies that the 500 cousins served the Paccekabuddhas together.

following [his] path of merit. (51) [932]

Fallen from there [he] then became
the famous king known as Nanda.
I was [that King Nanda's] chief queen;
my every desire was fulfilled. (52) [933]

Fallen from there, having become
Brahmadatta, lord of the earth,
for as long as his life lasted,
he then did attend upon all
the five hundred Lonely Sages
who were Padumavatī's sons.
Dwelling in the royal garden,
I [too] worshipped⁴⁴ those Gone-Out Ones. (53-54) [934-935]

Both of us having built stupas,
going forth [renouncing the world,]
experienced the boundless states,⁴⁵
[and] then we went to Brahma's world. (55) [936]

Fallen down to Mahātittha
he's well-born Pippalāyana.
Mother: Sumanadevī and
father: brahmin Kosigotta. (56) [937]

In the Madda country I, was
daughter of brahmin Kapila;
mother was Sucīmātī in
Sāgalā the best of cities. (57) [938]

My father having adorned me
with a thick golden ornament,
gave me to the wise⁴⁶ Kassapa,
who'd avoided desire for me. (58) [939]

One time that compassionate man,
gone forth wishing for karma's end,⁴⁷

⁴⁴BJTS reads *pūjayi*, "he worshipped," which is certainly possible, but I follow the PTS reading *pūjayiṇ* ("I worshipped") because otherwise the becoming-Bhaddā-Kāpilāni does not get inserted into this previous life of her husband's, as she does all the other previous lives.

⁴⁵the four boundless states are love of all beings (*mettā*), compassion for those who suffer (*karuṇā*), joy in others' joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

⁴⁶reading *dhīrassa* (BJTS) for *vīrassa* ("the Hero," PTS), an epithet used of Kassapa Buddha above [924].

⁴⁷BJTS read *kamma-anta-pekkhatam* for PTS *kamma-anta-pekkhako*; whether we take the term (with BJTS) as an adverb modifying "having gone," or (with PTS) as an adjective modifying "Kassapa" — either of which could produce this translation — the meaning is clear.

was moved at seeing some creatures
devoured by crows and such-like [birds]. (59) [940]

Then I too in the house was moved,⁴⁸
seeing worms that had been born in
sesame then baked by sun-heat,
being eaten up by [some] crows. (60) [941]

When wise [Kassapa] had renounced,
I followed him in renouncing.
For five years I resided [then]
along the path⁴⁹ of renouncers. (61) [942]

When Gotamī, the Victor's nurse,
had gone forth as a renouncer,
then come together with Buddha,
I [too] received [his] instruction. (62) [943]

After not a very long time,
I achieved the arahant-state.
O! Being the "beautiful friend"
of the resplendent Kassapa! (63) [944]

The Buddha's legitimate son,⁵⁰
very attentive, Kassapa,
is one who knows previous births,
and he sees the heavens and hells. (64) [945]

Then birth's destruction he attained;
special knowledges perfected;
a sage with the three knowledges,
that brahmin's a triple-knower. (65) [946]

Just so Bhaddā-Kāpilāni,
triple-knower who's conquered death.
She's one who wears [her] last body,
defeating Māra and his mount. (66) [947]

Seeing the dangers in the world,
we both [went forth] as renouncers.

⁴⁸lit., "attained to being moved (*saṃvega*), the religious experience that (like being overjoyed [*pasanna*]) is often a fore-runner to becoming an arahant in these hagiographical and parallel historical texts.

⁴⁹BJTS reads *paribbājavate* ("in the state of a renouncer") for *°pathe* ("on the path," PTS) but both editions include the other reading as alternates and the PTS editor has chosen what I also think is the best syntactically.

⁵⁰BJTS (and PTS alt.) reads *suto* for PTS *putto*, but as the synonyms both mean "son" this does not affect the translation.

We are now free of defilements;
tamed, cooled off, gone to nirvana. (67) [948]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
all [new] existence is destroyed.
Like elephants with broken chains,
I am living without constraint. (68) [949]

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! (69) [950]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (70) [951]

Thus indeed Bhikkhunī Bhaddā-Kāpilāni spoke these verses.

The legend of Bhaddā-Kāpilāni Therī⁵¹ is finished

⁵¹PTS omits Therī, which I supply from BJTS.