

Sukkā

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### [35. Sukkā<sup>1</sup>]

Ninety-one aeons ago the  
Leader, whose name was Vipassi,  
arose, the One Good to Look At,<sup>2</sup>  
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,<sup>3</sup> burning with fame,  
the Victor, the Best Debater,  
[the Buddha,] arose in<sup>4</sup> 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:<sup>5</sup>  
[a Buddhist nun] with vast knowledge. (7) [1220]

Gone forth, a *Dhamma*-bearer, I  
made Buddha's<sup>6</sup> dispensation shine.  
Gone to the lovely gods' city,  
I experienced great comfort. (8) [1221]

<sup>1</sup>“White” “Bright” Good,” an historical nun, DPPN II: 1173-1174

<sup>2</sup>*carunayano*

<sup>3</sup>*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”.

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

<sup>5</sup>*tadā pi ca tath' ev' ahaṃ*

<sup>6</sup>lit., “the Victor's”

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

Gone forth, [I] illuminated  
 the Sage's thought, as long as life.<sup>9</sup>  
 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,<sup>10</sup>  
 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's<sup>11</sup> dispensation shine. (12) [1225]

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

Gone forth in the dispensation  
 of that Hero Among Men<sup>15</sup> as well,  
 [I] learned the good Teaching by heart,  
 was confident in inquiry, (14) [1227]

very moral, also modest,  
 [very] skilled in the three trainings,<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>*jinuttamo*

<sup>8</sup>*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)

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

<sup>10</sup>*dīpavaro*

<sup>11</sup>lit., "the Victor's"

<sup>12</sup>*lokasaraṇo*

<sup>13</sup>*araṇo*, lit., "having no battle," "not adversarial," rhymed in the epithets *lokasaraṇo* and *maraṇantaḅo* that also appear in this verse

<sup>14</sup>*maraṇantaḅo*, lit., "gone to the end of death"

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

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

giving many talks on *Dhamma*  
with friendship as long as I lived.<sup>17</sup> (15) [1228]

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

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

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

“The Restrained One,<sup>22</sup> with former ascetics<sup>23</sup> restrained;  
the Liberated One,<sup>24</sup> with those liberated;  
[who had] the same color as a coin<sup>25</sup> made of gold,  
the Blessed One entered Rajagaha city.” (19) [1232]<sup>26</sup>

Seeing the Buddha’s majesty,  
and hearing him, Heap of Virtues,<sup>27</sup>  
pleasing my heart in the Buddha,  
I worshipped<sup>28</sup> [him] with all [my] strength. (20) [1233]

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

<sup>18</sup>= Rājagaha, Rajgir, in Bihār

<sup>19</sup>lit., “born in a rich clan of millionaires”

<sup>20</sup>or Giribbaja, here *Rājagahaṇ*

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

<sup>22</sup>*danto*, or “Tamed”

<sup>23</sup>*purāṇajaṭilehi*, lit., “former matted-haired [ascetics]”

<sup>24</sup>*vimutto*

<sup>25</sup>*Siṅgī-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.

<sup>26</sup>these lines (41 syllables in PTS, 40 syllables in BJTS [which omits the *ca* 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 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.

<sup>27</sup>*taṇ...guṇasañcayaṇ*

<sup>28</sup>lit., “did *pūjā*”

At [some] moment after that, in  
the presence of Dhammadinnā,<sup>29</sup>  
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.<sup>30</sup> (23) [1236]

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

“Why are these people in Rajgir  
acting like nymphs drunk on honey,  
unless<sup>32</sup> they're honoring<sup>33</sup> 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,<sup>34</sup>  
of the knowledge in others' hearts. (27) [1240]

I remember [my] former lives;  
[my] “divine eye” is purified.

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<sup>29</sup>#23, above

<sup>30</sup>lit., “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.

<sup>31</sup>yakkho

<sup>32</sup>ye...na, lit., “those who have not”

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

<sup>34</sup>reading *mahāmune* (voc.) with BJTS for PTS *mahāmuni* (nom.)

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 Therī<sup>35</sup> is finished

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<sup>35</sup>This is the BJTS reading. PTS reads *bhikkhunī Sukkā*