

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā)

The Canon of Discourses - Commentaries (Sutta
Piṭaka - Aṭṭhakathā)

1. The Collection of the Long Discourses - Commentaries
(1. Dīgha Nikāya - Aṭṭhakathā)

1. Commentary on the Chapter on the Aggregate of Morality
(1. Sīlakkhandhavaggaṭṭhakathā)

10. Commentary on the Discourse to Subha
(10. Subhasuttavaṇṇanā)



PaliVerse

1.The Collection of the Long Discourses - Commentaries

1. Commentary on the Chapter on the Aggregate of Morality

10. Explanation of the Discourse to Subha

Commentary on the Story of the Young Man Subha

444. Thus have I heard... etc. "at Sāvattṥī" - this is the Subha Discourse. Herein this is the explanation of obscure terms. "Not long after the Blessed One had attained final Nibbāna" means when the Blessed One had recently attained final Nibbāna, at a time of approximately one month after the final Nibbāna. This was said with reference to the day when, in the manner already stated in the explanation of the introduction, having taken the Blessed One's bowl and robes and having come, having drunk a milk purgative, he was seated in the monastery. "Son of Todeyya" means the son of the brahmin Todeyya. It is said that not far from Sāvattṥī there is a village named Tudi; because of his lordship over that, he came to be reckoned as "Todeyya." He was of great riches, with a fortune of forty-five crores, supremely miserly - Having thought "For one who gives, there is truly no non-diminishing of wealth," he gives nothing to anyone, and he also said to his son -

"Having seen the diminishing of eye ointments, and the accumulation of ant-hills;

And the gathering of honey, a wise one should dwell at home."

Having thus trained him only in non-giving, upon the collapse of the body, he was reborn as a dog in that very house. Subha was exceedingly fond of that dog. He feeds it with the very food he himself eats, and lifting it up, makes it lie on an excellent bed. Then one day, when the young man had gone out, the Blessed One entered that house for almsfood. The dog, having seen the Blessed One, barking, went near the Blessed One. Thereupon the Blessed One said to him: "Todeyya, formerly too, having treated me with contempt saying 'sir, sir,' you were born as a dog; now too, having barked, you will go to Avīci." The dog, having heard that talk, becoming remorseful, lay down in the ashes inside the oven; the people, having lifted him up, were not able to make him lie on the bed.

Subha, having come, said: "By whom was this dog removed from the bed?"The people, having said "By no one," reported that incident. The young man, having heard, having become angry thinking "My father was reborn in the Brahma world, but the ascetic Gotama makes my father a dog; whatever comes to his mouth he speaks," wishing to accuse the Blessed One of lying, having gone to the monastery, asked about that incident. The Blessed One, having told him in the same way, said for the purpose of proving the truth - "But is there, young man, wealth not declared by your father?" "There is, Master Gotama, a golden garland worth a hundred thousand, golden slippers worth a hundred thousand, a golden bowl worth a hundred thousand, and a hundred thousand coins." "Go, having fed that dog milk-rice with little water,

having placed him on the bed, at the time when he has slightly fallen asleep, ask him; he will tell you everything; then you will know him - 'This is my father.'" He did so. The dog told everything; then, having known him - "He is my father," with a gladdened mind towards the Blessed One, having gone and asked the Blessed One fourteen questions, at the conclusion of the answers, he went for refuge to the Blessed One; with reference to that it was said "the young brahmin Subha, son of Todeyya." "Was residing at Sāvattṭhī" means having come from his own revenue village, he dwells.

445-446. "Addressed a certain young man" means: when the Teacher had attained final Nibbāna, having heard "The Elder Ānanda, it is said, has come having taken his bowl and robes, and the great multitude approaches him for the purpose of seeing him," having thought "But having gone to the monastery, amidst the great multitude it would not be possible to easily offer friendly welcome or to hear a talk on the Teaching; having seen him when he has come to my house, I shall easily offer friendly welcome, and I have one uncertainty, I shall ask him that too," he addressed a certain young man. Regarding "free from illness" and so on: "illness" is called disagreeable feeling, which, having arisen in one part of the body, seizes all four postures as if binding them with an iron band; he says that he asks about the absence of that. "Free from affliction" means: a disease that makes life difficult is called affliction; he says that he asks about the absence of that too. For one who is sick, rising is indeed heavy, and there is no strength in the body; therefore, he says that he asks about the state of being free from sickness and about strength. "Dwelling in comfort" means: he says that he asks about pleasant abiding in the four postures of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. Then, showing the manner in which he should ask, he said beginning with "Subha."

447. "Taking into account the time and occasion" means the meaning is having grasped and reflected upon the time and occasion with wisdom. If tomorrow will be the time for our going, and a measure of strength will increase in the body, and no other uncomfortable dwelling will arise on account of the going, then having reflected upon this time and the occasion, which is termed the combination of reasons for going - "Perhaps we might come tomorrow" is what is meant.

448. "By the monk Cetaka" means by the one who obtained the name "Cetaka" because of being born in the Ceti country. "Pleasant and memorable talk" means "Dear Ānanda, what illness did the One of Ten Powers have, what did the Blessed One consume?" "Furthermore, sorrow arose in you by the Teacher's final Nibbāna; the Teacher did not attain final Nibbāna only for you alone; it was a great loss for the world with its gods. Who else now will be freed from death, when that foremost person of the world with its gods has attained final Nibbāna? Seeing whom else now will the King of Death be ashamed?" - having concluded the pleasant and memorable talk connected with death by such a method as this, and having given the Elder food suitable for the medicine taken the day before, at the conclusion of the meal he sat down to one side.

"Attendant, one who kept near" means having been an attendant, one who kept near, not one who seeks faults. Not with the intention of testing. "One who stayed close by" - this is a synonym for the preceding term itself. "Of which teachings that Master Gotama" - why does he ask? It is said that this thought occurred to him: "The teachings in which Master Gotama established this world - have they, after his

passing, been lost, or do they endure? If they endure, Ānanda will know. Come, let me ask him." Therefore he asked.

449. Then the elder, having collected the three Canons under the three aggregates and showing this, said beginning with "Of three indeed." The young man, not discerning what was spoken in brief - having thought "I shall ask in detail," said beginning with "Which three."

Commentary on the Aggregate of Morality

450-453. Thereupon, when the Elder had shown those as "of the noble aggregate of morality," he again asked each one: "But what, dear Ānanda, is that noble aggregate of morality?" The Elder too, having shown him the arising of a Buddha, expounding the Teaching of the thread, answered everything in due course in the very manner stated by the Blessed One. Therein, "and there is still more to be done" - here, in the Dispensation of the Blessed One, morality alone is not the core; indeed it is only a mere support. He showed that beyond this there is yet something else also to be done. "From here outside" means outside of the Buddha's Dispensation.

Commentary on the Aggregate of Concentration

454. "And how, young man, is a monk one with guarded doors in the sense faculties?" - this the Venerable Ānanda, even though asked about the aggregate of concentration thus: "But what, dear Ānanda, is that noble aggregate of concentration?" - those which were recited as "accomplished in morality, with guarded doors in the sense faculties, endowed with mindfulness and full awareness, content" - thus, immediately after morality, restraint of the faculties and so on, which are helpful factors for both, in between morality and concentration - having explained those, he began wishing to show the aggregate of concentration. And here, only the fine-material meditative absorptions have come, not the immaterial meditative absorptions; but they should be brought in and explained. For there is indeed no immaterial meditative attainment that is not included by the fourth meditative absorption.

471-480. "And there is still more to be done" - here, in the Dispensation of the Blessed One, there is no attainment of the final goal by mere unified focus of mind alone; it shows that beyond this there is yet something else to be done. "And there is nothing more to be done" - here, in the Dispensation of the Blessed One, there is indeed nothing to be done beyond this; it shows that the Dispensation of the Blessed One has arahantship as its final goal. The remainder is of manifest meaning everywhere.

Thus in the Sumaṅgalavilāsinī, the Commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya,

the explanation of the Discourse to Subha is completed.



ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

This translation is part of the PaliVerse Project - the first complete, unified English translation of the Pāli Canon together with its Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā) and Subcommentaries (Tīkā), accompanied by interactive study tools. PaliVerse is an ongoing project. The AI translations are continuously improved through experts' revisions and feedback. This text is the latest translation as of the date of download.

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