

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)

13. Commentary on the Discourse on the Threefold Knowledge
(13. Tevijjasuttavaṇṇanā)



PaliVerse

1.The Collection of the Long Discourses - Commentaries

1. Commentary on the Chapter on the Aggregate of Morality

13. Explanation of the Discourse on the Threefold Knowledge

518. Thus have I heard... etc. "Among the Kosalans" - this is the Discourse on the Threefold Knowledge. Herein this is the explanation of obscure terms. "Manasākaṭṭha" is the name of that village. "To the north of Manasākaṭṭha" means not far from Manasākaṭṭha, on the northern side. "In a mango grove" means in a grove of young mango trees. It is said that that piece of land was delightful; below, sand resembling a silver plate was strewn about, and above, the mango grove had dense branches and leaves like a canopy of jewels. The meaning is that he dwells in that mango grove, which is suitable for Buddhas and affords the happiness of solitude.

519. "Well-known, well-known" means recognised here and there through the achievement of family lineage and so on. "Caṅkī" and so on are their names. Therein, Caṅkī was a dweller at Opāsāda. Tārakkha was a dweller at Icchānaṅgala. Pokkharasāti was a dweller at Ukkaṭṭha. Jāṇusoṇī was a dweller at Sāvattṭhī. Todeyya was a dweller at Tudigāma. "And others" means and other many people. Having come from their own respective dwelling places, they are dwelling there for the purpose of reciting the sacred hymns. It is said that because of the delightfulness of Manasākaṭṭha, those brahmins, having had houses built there on the riverbank, having had them enclosed, having prevented the entry of many others, went there from time to time and dwelt.

520-521. "Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja" means of Vāseṭṭha, the pupil of Pokkharasāti, and of Bhāradvāja, the pupil of Tārakkha. These two, it is said, were of noble birth and had mastered the three Vedas. "On a walk" means walking about on foot for the purpose of dispelling fatigue caused by sitting for too long. It is said that they, having done their recitation during the day, having risen in the evening, having had bathing requisites, perfumes, garlands, oil, and washed garments brought, surrounded by their own attendants, wishing to bathe, having gone to the riverbank, walked up and down back and forth on a stretch of sand the colour of a silver plate. When one was walking, the other followed walking behind; then again the other followed the other. Therefore it was said "walking up and down and wandering about." "About the path and the non-path" means about the path and the non-path. The meaning is that they raised a discussion referring to the path and the non-path thus: "Having fulfilled which practice, by which path is it possible to go easily to the Brahma world?" "The direct way" is a synonym for the straight path; or, by this they come directly, they arrive straight - thus it is the direct way. "Leading to liberation" means leading forth - thus "leading forth" means it leads forth; the meaning is that going, it goes.

"Leading one who practises it to companionship with Brahmā" means whoever does that path, practises it, it goes for his co-existence with Brahmā, for manifestation in one place. This is the meaning. "Which" means "which this." "Declared" means

spoken, explained. "By the brahmin Pokkharasāti" - he cites his own teacher. Thus Vāseṭṭha goes about having praised and upheld his own teacher's doctrine. Bhāradvāja too, his own. Therefore it was said "Indeed Vāseṭṭha was not able" and so on.

Then Vāseṭṭha, having thought "The talk of both of us is not leading to liberation; and in this world there is no one named skilled in the path equal to the Venerable Gotama; and the Venerable Gotama dwells not far away; he will cut through our uncertainty like a merchant seated with scales in hand," having reported that matter to Bhāradvāja, both having gone, reported their own discussion to the Blessed One. Therefore it was said "Then Vāseṭṭha, etc. which has been declared by the brahmin Tārakkha."

522. "Here, Master Gotama" means on this path and non-path. Among "strife, contention" and so on, strife is what arises first. Afterwards there is contention. Though this is twofold, because of the views of different teachers, it is difference of views.

523. "Then about what is your" means you too, having taken up your own teacher's traditional teaching, stand firm thinking "this alone is the path," and Bhāradvāja too holds only his own teacher's traditional teaching; for not even one of them has any doubt about a single one. This being so, he asks "about what is your strife?"

524. "About the path and the non-path, Master Gotama" means about the path, Master Gotama, and the non-path, and the straight path and the crooked path. This is the meaning. It is said that he does not call even a single brahmin's path "not a path." But just as one's own teacher's path is the straight path, he does not allow thus for others; therefore, explaining that very meaning, he said beginning with "Although, Master Gotama."

"All of them" - he speaks with a change of gender; what is meant is "all those." "Many" means eight or ten. "Various paths" means of various kinds - such as great and small foot-paths, cart-roads, and so on - paths for entering the village, having come from the surrounding villages, rivers, lakes, fields, and so on.

525-526. "Do you say 'they lead out,' Vāseṭṭha" - the Blessed One, having made a verbal expression three times, caused him to make an acknowledgement. Why? For sectarians, having acknowledged, afterwards when being rebuked, deny. He would not be able to do so.

527-529. "Teva tevijjā" means "te tevijjā" (those possessing the threefold true knowledge). The letter "va" is merely an inserted consonant for euphonic connection. "Andhavenī" means a blind succession. One blind man grasps the end of a stick held by one person with eyes, another blind man grasps that blind man, another grasps that one - thus fifty or sixty blind men joined together in succession is called a "blind file." "Paramparasamsattā" means clinging to one another, the meaning being devoid even of a person with eyes who holds the stick. It is said that a certain cheat, having seen a group of blind men, encouraged them saying "In such and such a village food and provisions are easily obtained." When they said "Then, master, lead us there, and we shall give you such and such a thing," having taken the bribe, on the way he turned aside from the road, went around a large shrub, made the last one grasp the

waist of the first one with his hand, and saying "I have some business to attend to; you go on for now," he ran away. They, even after going for a whole day, not finding the road, having lamented "Where is our man with eyes? Where is the road?" not finding the road, died right there. With reference to them it was said "clinging to one another." "Purimopi" means even one among the former ten brahmins. "Majjhimopi" means even one among the middle ones, the teachers and teachers' teachers. "Pacchimopi" means even one among the brahmins who now possess the threefold true knowledge. "Hassakaññeva" means merely something to be laughed at. "Nāmakaññeva" means merely inferior. That is void due to the absence of substance, and hollow precisely because of being void. Now, let the Brahmā world stand aside, which has never been previously seen by those possessing the threefold true knowledge. In order to show that even the moon and sun which those possessing the threefold true knowledge do see, they are not able to teach the path to companionship even with them, he said beginning with "What do you think?"

530. Therein, "from where the moon and sun rise" means at whatever time they rise. "And where they set" means at whatever time they set; the meaning is they see at the time of rising and at the time of setting. "Imploring" means they implore thus: "Rise, venerable moon, rise, venerable sun." "Praising" means they praise by saying such things as "The moon is gentle, the moon is perfectly round, the moon is radiant" and so on. "With joined palms" means with raised joined palms. "Paying homage" means saying "Homage, homage."

531-532. In "yaṃ passanti," here "yaṃ" is merely a particle. "Kiṃ pana na kirā" here means "but here, what is to be said?" Where, it is said, Brahmā has not been seen face to face by the brahmins who possess the threefold true knowledge - thus the meaning should be understood.

Discourse on the Simile of the River Aciravatī

542. "Level to the brim" means filled evenly. "So that a crow could drink from it" means drinkable by a crow standing on the bank anywhere - thus "so that a crow could drink from it." "Wanting to cross to the far shore" means wishing to go to the other bank, having crossed over the river. "Might call" means might summon. "Come, far shore, come, far shore" means: hey, far shore, near shore, come; then you will take me and carry me away suddenly; I have urgent business - this is the meaning.

544. "Those qualities that make one a brahmin" - here, qualities that make one a brahmin should be understood as those distinguished as the five moral precepts and the ten wholesome courses of action; those opposite to them are those that make one a non-brahmin. "We invoke Indra" means we invoke, we summon Indra. Having thus shown the uselessness of the brahmins' invoking, the Blessed One, once again, shining like the sun in the belly of the ocean, surrounded by five hundred monks, seated on the bank of the Aciravatī, bringing forth yet another simile of the river, said beginning with "just as."

546. "Types of sensual pleasure" means sensual pleasures in the sense of being desirable, and types in the sense of binding. In "I allow, monks, a twofold double robe of new cloths," here the meaning of type is the meaning of layer. In "Times pass by, nights hurry on, the stages of life gradually give up," here the meaning of type is the meaning of heap. In "An offering of a hundredfold is to be expected," here the

meaning of type is the meaning of benefit. And in "One might make intestines and mesentery, many garlands of strings," here the meaning of type is the meaning of binding. Here too this same is intended. Therefore it was said "types in the sense of binding." "Cognisable by eye" means to be seen by eye-consciousness. By this method the meaning should be understood in "cognisable by ear" and so on as well. "Desirable" means whether they are sought after or not, the meaning is that they have become desirable objects. "Lovely" means delightful. "Agreeable" means mind-enhancing. "Enticing" means of a dear nature. "Connected with sensuality" means accompanied by sensuality arising having made them an object. "Arousing" means exciting; the meaning is that they have become the cause for the arising of lust.

"Bound by greed" means having been overpowered by greed. "Infatuated" means overpowered by excessive craving that has reached the state of infatuation. "Immersed" means sunk into, plunged in, having reached the conclusion that "this is the substance." "Not seeing the danger" means not seeing the danger. "Without wisdom of escape" means devoid of the wisdom of fully understanding thus "this is the escape herein," devoid of use with reviewing - this is the meaning.

548. Regarding "obstructions" and so on: they obstruct, thus they are obstructions. They hinder, thus they are mental hindrances. They cover up, thus they are coverings. They envelop, thus they are envelopings. The detailed discussion of sensual desire and so on should be taken from the Visuddhimagga.

549-550. The terms "obstructed, hindered, bound, and enveloped" are stated by way of obstruction and so on. "With possessions" - he asks whether he has possessions by way of possession of a wife. In the passage beginning with "Without possessions, Master Gotama" and so on, because of the absence of sensual desire, he is without possessions by way of possession of a wife. Because of the absence of anger, he is without enmity towards anyone, with a mind free from enmity. Because of the absence of sloth and torpor, he is without affliction, that is, free from the affliction reckoned as mental sickness. Because of the absence of restlessness and remorse, his mind is undefiled by defilements such as restlessness and remorse, and his mental state is well purified. Because of the absence of sceptical doubt, he wields mastery over the mind. And as brahmins are those led by the mind, that is, they are subject to the control of the mind, he is not such - he is a wielder of power.

552. "But here" means here, on the path to the Brahma world. "Having sunk down" means having approached what is not a path as though it were "a path." "They sink further" means with the perception "it is level ground," they enter in as though descended into mud. "Having sunk further, they reach distress" means having thus sunk down as though in mud, they reach distress, the crushing of limb after limb. "They cross over, methinks, on dry ground" means being deceived by a mirage, with the perception "it is a river so that a crow could drink from it," thinking "we shall cross," striving with hands and feet, they cross over on dry ground, methinks. Therefore, just as there is the crushing and breaking of hands, feet, and so on, so they reach crushing and breaking in the realms of misery. And right here they obtain neither happiness nor comfort. "Therefore this for brahmins who possess the threefold true knowledge" means therefore this Scripture of the threefold true knowledge, which is intended to illuminate the path to companionship with Brahmā, for brahmins who possess the threefold true knowledge. "The desert of the threefold

true knowledge" means the wilderness of the threefold true knowledge. For "desert" is a term for a great forest without villages. "The wilderness of the threefold true knowledge" means a waterless forest covered with trees that bear neither flowers nor fruit and are of no use. Referring to a place where, having deviated from the path, one is not even able to turn back, he said "it is also called the wilderness of the threefold true knowledge." "The disaster of the threefold true knowledge" means this is similar to the fivefold disaster for those who possess the threefold true knowledge. For just as there is no happiness for one who has met with disaster of relatives, disease, wealth, view, and morality, so it shows that there is no happiness for those who possess the threefold true knowledge on account of the Scripture of the threefold true knowledge.

554. "Born and brought up" means born and brought up there. For one who is only born there but brought up elsewhere, the village paths all around are not altogether evident to him; therefore he said "born and brought up." Even one born and brought up there, if he has long departed, they are not altogether evident to him. Therefore he said "just after he had left"; the meaning is that he had departed at that very moment. "Hesitation" means tarrying by way of uncertainty, thinking "Is this the path, or is this not the path?" "Confusion" means just as when someone is suddenly asked about a subtle matter, his body takes on a state of rigidity - such is the seizing of rigidity. "But there would never be" - by this he shows the unobstructed nature of the knowledge of omniscience. For that man's knowledge might be obstructed by way of Māra's adverting and so on. Because of that, he might hesitate or be confused. But the knowledge of omniscience is unobstructed; he explains that no obstacle to it can be made by anyone.

555. "May Master Gotama raise up" means may Master Gotama lift up. "The brahmin generation" means the brahmin youth; the meaning is: may Master Gotama, having lifted up my brahmin son from the path of misery, establish him on the path to the Brahma world. Then the Blessed One, having shown him the arising of a Buddha, wishing to teach the path leading to the Brahma world beginning with the abiding in friendliness and so on, together with the preliminary practice, said beginning with "if so, Vāsetṭha." Therein, beginning with "here a Truth-finder" has been expanded in the Sāmaññaphala. Regarding what should be said concerning "accompanied by friendliness" and so on, all that has been stated in the Visuddhimagga in the treatise on the divine abiding meditation subject. But "just as, Vāsetṭha, a powerful conch-blower" and so on is here unprecedented. Therein, "powerful" means endowed with strength. "Conch-blower" means one who blows a conch shell. "With little difficulty" means without trouble, without pain. For a weak conch-blower, even while blowing the conch, is not able to make himself heard in the four directions with his voice; the sound of his conch does not pervade in every direction. But for a powerful one it is spreading out; therefore he said beginning with "powerful." Regarding "by the liberation of mind through friendliness": here, when "friendliness" is said, both access and absorption are applicable; but when "liberation of mind" is said, only absorption is applicable. "Whatever action done within limits": action done within limits is called that belonging to the sensual sphere of existence. Action done without limits is that belonging to the fine-material-sphere and immaterial-sphere of existence. For that, having surpassed the measure, having increased by way of specific, non-specific, and directional pervading, because of having been so done, is called "done without

limits." "It does not remain there, it does not persist there" means that sensual-sphere action does not stay behind in that fine-material-sphere and immaterial-sphere action, does not stand. What is meant? That sensual-sphere action is not able to stick in between or to stand in that fine-material-sphere and immaterial-sphere action, or to become established having pervaded, having consumed, and having taken its own place in the fine-material-sphere and immaterial-sphere action. Rather, the fine-material-sphere and immaterial-sphere action itself, like a great flood overwhelming a small body of water, having pervaded, having consumed, and having taken its own place in the sensual-sphere action, remains. Having warded off its result, it itself leads to companionship with Brahmā. "One who dwells thus" means one who dwells thus in friendliness and so on.

559. "We go to Master Gotama for refuge" - this is their second going for refuge. For they had already gone for refuge the first time, having heard the Vāseṭṭha Discourse in the Middle Fifty, but having heard this Discourse on the Threefold Knowledge, they went for refuge for the second time also. After the elapse of a few days, having gone forth, they received both full ordination and arahantship in the Aggañña Discourse. The remainder is clear everywhere.

*Thus in the Sumaṅgalavilāsinī, the Commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya,
the explanation of the Discourse on the Threefold Knowledge is completed.
And completed is the commentary on the meaning of the Sīlakkhandha Chapter,
adorned with thirteen discourses.
The commentary on the Sīlakkhandha Chapter 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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