

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

The Triple Canon (Tipiṭaka)

The Canon of Discourses (Sutta Piṭaka)

5. The Collection of Minor Texts (5. Khuddaka Nikāya)

09. Verses of the Elder Nuns (09. Therīgāthāpāḷi)

13. The Book of the Twenties (13. Vīsatinipāto)

[Thig 13.1-5, PTS 148-158]



PaliVerse

5. The Collection of Minor Texts

09. Verses of the Elder Nuns

13. The Book of the Twenties

1. Verses of the Elder Nun Ambapālī

- 252.** "Black, like the colour of wasps, with curly tips, my hair was;
Now through ageing, like hemp fibres, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 253.** "Like a perfumed casket, fragrant, filled with flowers, was my hair on the head.
Now through ageing, it smells like animal hair, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 254.** Like a grove, dense and well-planted, adorned with tips arranged by comb and needle;
That, through ageing, sparse here and there, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 255.** "Adorned with gold upon the dark mass of hair, it shone beautifully, decorated with lovely braids;
That head, through ageing, has been made bald, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 256.** "Like lines well drawn by a painter, my eyebrows were beautiful before;
Now through ageing, hanging down with wrinkles, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 257.** "Bright and very beautiful like gems, my eyes were deep blue and elongated;
They, struck by ageing, are not beautiful, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 258.** "And my nose, smooth and prominent, shone beautifully towards the bloom of youth;
Now through ageing, as if shrivelled, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 259.** "Like a bracelet well made, well finished, my earlobes were beautiful before;
Now through ageing, hanging down with wrinkles, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 260.** "Like the colour of a plantain bud, my teeth were beautiful before;
Now through ageing, broken and discoloured, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 261.** "Wandering in the jungle thicket in the forest, like a cuckoo I warbled sweetly;

That, through ageing, falters here and there, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.

- 262.** "Like a smooth conch-shell well polished, my neck was beautiful before;
Now through ageing, broken and bent, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 263.** "Both like round cross-bars in comparison, my arms were beautiful before;
Now through ageing, like withered trumpet-flower branches, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 264.** "Adorned with smooth signet rings of gold, my hands were beautiful before;
Now through ageing, like roots and tubers, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 265.** "Both plump, round, joined together and upraised, my breasts were beautiful before;
Like water-skins they hang down, without water, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 266.** "Like a polished golden plank, my body shone beautifully before;
Now it is covered with fine wrinkles, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 267.** "Both like an elephant's trunk in comparison, my thighs were beautiful before;
Now through ageing, like bamboo tubes, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 268.** "Adorned with smooth golden anklets, my calves were beautiful before;
Now through ageing, like sesame stalks, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 269.** "Both like cotton-stuffed cushions in comparison, my feet were beautiful before;
Now through ageing, cracked and wrinkled, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise.
- 270.** "Such was this body, decrepit, the abode of many sufferings;
With its plaster fallen off, a house of ageing, the word of the truth-speaker is not otherwise."

... The Elder Nun Ambapālī...

2. Verses of the Elder Nun Rohinī

- 271.** "'Ascetics,' dear lady, you sleep, 'ascetics,' you awake;
You praise only ascetics, surely you will become a female ascetic.
- 272.** "Abundant food and drink you give to the ascetics;
Rohinī, now I ask you, why are the ascetics dear to you?

- 273.** "Unwilling to work, lazy, living on what is given by others;
Hopeful, lovers of sweet things, why are the ascetics dear to you?"
- 274.** "At long last indeed, dear father, you inquire of me about the ascetics;
I will explain to you their wisdom, morality and effort.
- 275.** "Loving work, not lazy, doers of the foremost work;
They abandon lust and hate, therefore the ascetics are dear to me.
- 276.** "The three roots of evil, those who act purely shake off;
All evil has been abandoned by them, therefore the ascetics are dear to me.
- 277.** "Their bodily action is pure, and their verbal action is such;
Their mental action is pure, therefore the ascetics are dear to me.
- 278.** "Spotless like a conch shell or pearl, pure within and without;
Full of bright qualities, therefore the ascetics are dear to me.
- 279.** "Very learned, bearers of the Teaching, noble ones, living righteously by the
Teaching;
They teach the meaning and the Teaching, therefore the ascetics are dear to
me.
- 280.** "Very learned, bearers of the Teaching, noble ones, living righteously by the
Teaching;
With unified minds, mindful, therefore the ascetics are dear to me.
- 281.** "Going afar, mindful, speaking with wisdom, unagitated;
They understand the end of suffering, therefore the ascetics are dear to me.
- 282.** From whatever village they depart, they do not look back at anything;
They go without longing, therefore the ascetics are dear to me.
- 283.** "They do not store in granaries, nor in jars, nor in baskets;
Seeking what is already prepared, therefore the ascetics are dear to me.
- 284.** "They do not take unwrought gold, nor gold nor money;
They sustain themselves with the present, therefore the ascetics are dear to
me.
- 285.** "Gone forth from various families, and from various countries;
They hold each other dear, therefore the ascetics are dear to me."
- 286.** "Indeed for our benefit, dear lady, you were born in this family, Rohinī;
With faith in the Buddha and the Teaching, and with keen respect for the
Community.
- 287.** "For you understand this, the unsurpassed field of merit;
These ascetics accept offerings from us too."
- 288.** "The sacrifice is established here, it will be fruitful for us;

If you fear suffering, if suffering is unpleasant to you.

- 289.** "Go to the Buddha, the Teaching, and such a Community for refuge;
Take upon yourself the moralities, that will be for your benefit."
- 290.** "I go to the Buddha, the Teaching, and such a Community for refuge;
I take upon myself the moralities, that will be for my benefit."
- 291.** "Formerly I was a kinsman of Brahma, now I am a brahmin;
I am a possessor of the threefold true knowledge, a learned one, one who has
attained the highest knowledge, one who has bathed."

... The Elder Nun Rohinī...

3. Verses of the Elder Nun Cāpā

- 292.** "Before he held a staff in hand, now he is a deer-hunter;
Through hope he sank into a terrible mire, he was not able to reach the
beyond."
- 293.** "Thinking me well-intoxicated, Cāpā pleased the son;
Having cut the bond to Cāpā, I shall go forth again."
- 294.** "Do not be angry with me, great hero, do not be angry with me, great sage;
For indeed, for one afflicted by wrath, there is no purity, how much less
austere asceticism."
- 295.** "I shall depart from Nāḷā, who here will remain in Nāḷā;
Binding ascetics living righteously by the Teaching with her womanly form."
- 296.** "Come, Kāḷa, turn back, enjoy sensual pleasures as before;
Both I and my relatives are brought under your control."
- 297.** "From here, Cāpā, a quarter part, as you speak to me;
For a man attached to you, that would indeed be lofty."
- 298.** "Like a dark-limbed woman, a flowering takkāri tree on a mountain top;
Like a pomegranate sapling in full bloom, like a trumpet-flower tree within an
island."
- 299.** "Me, with limbs anointed with yellow sandalwood, wearing the finest Kāsi cloth;
Me, such a beautiful one, having left behind, for whose sake do you go?"
- 300.** "Just as a fowler wishes to capture a bird;
With this contrived appearance, you will not ensnare me."
- 301.** "And this fruit of a son, Kāḷa, produced by you for me;
Me, such a one with a son, having left behind, for whose sake do you go?"
- 302.** "The wise give up sons, then relatives, then wealth;
Great heroes go forth, like an elephant having cut its bond."

- 303.** "Now this son of yours, with a stick or with a dagger,
Or I will dash him to the ground; you will not go because of sorrow for your son."
- 304.** "If you give the son to jackals and dogs,
You will not make me return for the sake of a child, wretched one."
- 305.** "Well now, venerable one, where will you go, Kāḷa;
To which village and market town, city or royal capital?"
- 306.** "We were before leaders of groups, not ascetics though thinking ourselves ascetics;
We wandered from village to village, to cities and royal capitals."
- 307.** "For this Blessed One is the Buddha, towards the river Nerañjarā;
For the abandoning of all suffering, he expounds the Teaching to living beings;
I am going to his presence, he will be my Teacher."
- 308.** "Now you should pay homage to the unsurpassed lord of the world;
And having circumambulated him, you should dedicate the offering."
- 309.** "This indeed can be obtained by us, as you speak to me;
Now I shall pay homage for you to the unsurpassed lord of the world;
And having circumambulated him, I shall dedicate the offering."
- 310.** Then Kāḷa departed, towards the river Nerañjarā;
He saw the Enlightened by himself, teaching the Deathless state.
- 311.** Suffering, the origin of suffering, and the overcoming of suffering;
The noble eightfold path, leading to the peace of suffering.
- 312.** Having paid homage to his feet, and having circumambulated him;
Having dedicated the offering to Cāpā, I went forth into homelessness;
The three true knowledges have been attained, the Buddha's teaching has been fulfilled.

... The Elder Nun Cāpā...

4. Verses of the Elder Nun Sundarī

- 313.** "Your children have died, dear lady, you who formerly devoured them;
You by day and by night, grieve exceedingly."
- 314.** "Today, having consumed all your hundred sons, brahmin woman;
Vāseṭṭhi, by what reason do you not grieve excessively?"
- 315.** "Many hundreds of sons, and hundreds of congregations of kinsmen;
Were consumed in the past, both mine and yours, brahmin."
- 316.** "I, having known the escape from birth and from death;
I do not grieve, I do not weep, nor did I worry."

- 317.** "Wonderful indeed, Vāseṭṭhi, you speak such a word;
Whose Teaching have you understood, that you speak such an utterance?"
- 318.** "This one, brahmin, is the Perfectly Enlightened One, towards the city of
Mithilā;
For the abandoning of all suffering, he expounded the Teaching to living
beings.
- 319.** "Having heard the Teaching from that Worthy One, O brahmin, free from
clinging;
There having cognised the Good Teaching, I dispelled my sorrow for my son."
- 320.** "So I too shall go, towards the city of Mithilā;
Perhaps that Blessed One may release me from all suffering."
- 321.** The brahmin saw the Buddha, free, without clinging;
He expounded the Teaching to him, the sage who has gone beyond suffering.
- 322.** Suffering, the origin of suffering, and the overcoming of suffering;
The noble eightfold path, leading to the peace of suffering.
- 323.** There, having cognised the Good Teaching, he delighted in the going forth;
Sujāta, within three nights, touched the three true knowledges.
- 324.** "Come, charioteer, go, hand over this chariot for me;
Tell the brahmin woman of good health, 'The brahmin has now gone forth;
Sujāta, within three nights, touched the three true knowledges.'"
- 325.** Then the charioteer, having taken the chariot and also the thousand,
Told the brahmin woman of good health, "The brahmin has now gone forth;
Sujāta, within three nights, touched the three true knowledges."
- 326.** "This horse-carriage and also the thousand, charioteer;
Having heard of the brahmin with the threefold true knowledge, I give you a
gift."
- 327.** "Let the horse-carriage be yours alone, and also the thousand, brahmin
woman;
I too shall go forth, in the presence of the one of excellent wisdom."
- 328.** "Elephants, cattle and horses, jewelled earrings, and this prosperous
household wealth having abandoned;
Your father has gone forth, enjoy the possessions, Sundarī; You are the heiress
in the family."
- 329.** "Elephants, cattle and horses, jewelled earrings, and this charming household
wealth having abandoned;
My father has gone forth, distressed by sorrow for his son;

I too shall go forth, distressed by sorrow for my brother."

- 330.** "May that thought of yours succeed, whatever you desire, Sundarī;
Almsfood obtained by standing up and gleaning, and a rag robe;
Accomplishing these, in the world beyond, without mental corruptions."
- 331.** "For me as a female trainee, lady, the divine eye has been purified;
I know past lives, where I dwelt before."
- 332.** "In dependence on you, beautiful one, elder nun, ornament of the Community;
The three true knowledges have been attained, the Buddha's teaching has
been fulfilled."
- 333.** "Permit me, lady, I wish to go to Sāvattthī;
I shall roar the lion's roar in the presence of the Buddha, the foremost."
- 334.** "See, Sundarī, the Teacher, golden-coloured, with golden skin;
The tamer of the untamed, the Perfectly Enlightened One, safe from every
quarter."
- 335.** "See Sundarī coming, free, without clinging;
Without lust, unbound, having performed one's obligations, without mental
corruptions."
- 336.** "Having departed from Benares, I have come into your presence;
Your female disciple, O Great Hero, Sundarī pays homage at your feet."
- 337.** "You are the Buddha, you are the Teacher, I am your daughter, brahmin;
A legitimate one, born from your mouth, who has done what had to be done,
without mental corruptions."
- 338.** "Welcome to you, Bhadda, and your coming is not unwelcome;
For thus indeed the tamed ones come, to pay homage at the Teacher's feet;
Without lust, unbound, who have done what had to be done, without mental
corruptions."

... The Elder Nun Sundarī...

5. Verses of the Elder Nun Subhā, the Smith's Daughter

- 339.** "When I was young, dressed in pure garments, I heard the teaching before;
For me, being heedful, there was full realisation of the truths."
- 340.** "Then I, in all sensual pleasures, found intense discontent;
Having seen fear in identity, I longed only for renunciation."
- 341.** "Having left behind my group of relatives, and slaves and workers;
Prosperous villages and fields, delightful and joyful."
- 342.** "Having abandoned no small wealth, I went forth;
Thus having left through faith, when the Good Teaching is well proclaimed."
- 343.** "This would not be proper for one who aspires to nothingness;

Who, having abandoned gold and silver, would come back again.

- 344.** "Silver or gold is not for enlightenment, not for peace;
This is not lawful for an ascetic, this is not noble wealth.
- 345.** "This is productive of greed and intoxication, deluding, increasing defilement;
Dangerous, full of trouble, and here there is no stable duration.
- 346.** "Here, men who are lustful and heedless, with defiled minds;
Mutually opposed, they make quarrels far and wide.
- 347.** "Murder and imprisonment and affliction, loss and sorrow and lamentation;
For those afflicted by sensual pleasures, much disaster is seen.
- 348.** "Me, such a one, relatives like enemies, why do you engage me in sensual pleasures?
Know me as one gone forth, seeing danger in sensual pleasures.
- 349.** "Not by gold and money are mental corruptions eliminated;
Sensual pleasures are enemies, murderers, foes, binding darts.
- 350.** "Me, such a one, relatives like enemies, why do you engage me in sensual pleasures?
Know me as one gone forth, shaven-headed, wrapped in the double robe.
- 351.** "Almsfood obtained by standing up and gleaning, and a rag robe;
This indeed is suitable for me, a resource for the homeless one.
- 352.** "Sensual pleasures have been vomited out by the great sages, those that are divine and those that are human;
Liberated in the secure place, they have attained unshakeable happiness.
- 353.** "May I never meet with sensual pleasures, in which no shelter is found;
Sensual pleasures are enemies, murderers, like a mass of fire, painful.
- 354.** "This is an obstacle, a danger, bringing vexation, thorny;
Greed, very uneven, and this is great, with delusion as its entrance.
- 355.** "A danger of dreadful form, sensual pleasures are like a snake's head;
Those fools who delight in them, worldlings who have become blind.
- 356.** "For beings stuck in the mire of sensual pleasure, many in the world are fools;
They do not know the limit of birth and of death.
- 357.** "The path leading to an unfortunate destination, human beings, because of sensual pleasures;
Many indeed proceed along it, bringing disease upon themselves.
- 358.** "Thus generating enemies, tormenting, subject to defilement;
Worldly gains are binding, sensual pleasures are bonds to death.

- 359.** "Maddening, enticing, sensual pleasures crush the mind;
For the defilement of beings, quickly laid as a snare by Māra.
- 360.** "Sensual pleasures have endless dangers, much suffering, great poison;
Of little enjoyment, conflict-causing, drying up the bright side.
- 361.** "I, having seen such disaster, caused by sensual pleasures;
I will not return to that, always delighting in Nibbāna.
- 362.** "Having made conflict with sensual pleasures, longing for coolness;
Diligent I shall dwell, at the elimination of all fetters.
- 363.** "Sorrowless, stainless, secure, the Noble Eightfold, straight;
That path I follow, by which the great sages have crossed over."
- 364.** See this righteous one, Subhā, the smith's daughter;
Having attained that without longing, she meditates at the root of a tree.
- 365.** Today is the eighth day since going forth, endowed with faith, beautiful
through the Good Teaching;
Trained by Uppalavaṇṇā, possessing the threefold true knowledge, victorious
over death.
- 366.** She is a freewoman, free of debt, a nun with developed faculties;
Unbound from all mental bonds, who has done what had to be done, without
mental corruptions.
- 367.** Sakka, with the host of gods, having approached by supernormal power,
The lord of beings pays homage to Subhā, the smith's daughter.

... The Elder Nun Subhā, the Smith's Daughter...

The Book of Twenties is concluded.



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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