

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā)

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

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02. Commentary on the Teaching in Verses (02. Dhammapada-
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PaliVerse

5. The Collection of Minor Texts

02. Commentary on the Teaching in Verses

15. The Chapter on Happiness

1. The Story of the Settling of the Relatives' Quarrel

197-199. "Very happily indeed" - the Teacher, while dwelling among the Sakyans, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to his relatives for the purpose of appeasing a dispute.

It is said that the Sākiyans and Koliyans, having had a single dam constructed across a river named Rohiṇī between the city of Kapilavatthu and the city of Koliya, cultivate their crops. Then, in the month of Jetṭhamūla, when the crops were withering, the labourers of the residents of both cities gathered together. There the residents of the city of Koliya said - "If this water is drawn off to both sides, it will not suffice for you nor for us. But our crop will be produced with just one watering. Give this water to us." The others too said - "When you have filled your granaries and are standing by, we, having taken red gold, sapphires, and dark coins, with baskets and bags and so on in hand, will not be able to go about at your house doors. Our crop too will be produced with just one watering. Give this water to us." "We will not give it." "We too will not give it" - thus having escalated the talk, one stood up and gave a blow to another, and he too to yet another - thus having struck one another and having insulted the birth of the royal families, they escalated the dispute.

The Koliyan labourers say - "You roar having taken the Kapilavatthu-dwellers with you, who like dogs and jackals and so on lived together with their own sisters. What will their elephants and horses and shield-weapons do to us?" The Sākiyan labourers too say "You now roar having taken leprous children with you, who, helpless, without refuge, like animals, dwelt in jujube trees. What will their elephants and horses and shield-weapons do to us?" They went and told the ministers appointed to that work; the ministers told the royal families. Thereupon the Sākiyans - "We shall show our strength and power to those who lived together with their sisters" - went forth prepared for battle. The Koliyans too - "We shall show our strength and power to those who dwelt in jujube trees" - went forth prepared for battle.

The Teacher too, towards the break of dawn, surveying the world, having seen his relatives, having thought "If I do not go, these will perish; it is fitting for me to go," went alone through the sky and sat cross-legged in the air in the middle of the Rohiṇī river. The relatives, having seen the Teacher, having thrown down their weapons, paid homage. Then the Teacher said to them - "What is this dispute about, great kings?" "We do not know, venerable sir." "Who then will know?" They, by this method - "The viceroy will know, the general will know" - having asked down to the slaves and labourers, said "Venerable sir, it is a dispute about water." "What is water worth, great kings?" "Of little value, venerable sir." "What are warriors worth, great kings?" "Warriors are priceless, venerable sir." "It is inappropriate for you to destroy priceless

warriors in dependence on water of little value." They were silent. Then the Teacher, having addressed them, said "Why, great kings, do you act in such a way? In my absence, today a river of blood would have flowed. What you have done is inappropriate. You dwell with enmity through the five kinds of enmity; I dwell free from enmity. You dwell afflicted by mental defilements; I am unafflicted. You dwell eager in the quest for the types of sensual pleasure; I dwell without eagerness" - having said this, he spoke these verses -

197. "Very happily indeed we live, free from enmity among the hostile,
Among hostile human beings, we dwell free from enmity.
198. "Very happily indeed we live, free from affliction among the afflicted;
Among afflicted human beings, we dwell free from affliction.
199. "Very happily indeed we live, without zeal among the zealous;
Among zealous human beings, we dwell without zeal."

Therein, "very happily" means well happily. This is what is meant - Those householders who, by means of housebreaking and so on, or else those gone forth who, by means of medical treatment and so on, having produced a livelihood, say "we live happily" - compared to them, it is we indeed who live very happily, we who are free from enmity among human beings hostile with the five enmities, free from affliction by being free from defilements among human beings afflicted by defilements, and without zeal by the absence of that quest among those zealous in the quest for the five strands of sensual pleasure. The remainder is of clear meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, many attained the fruition of stream-entry and so on.

The story of the appeasement of the relatives' dispute is the first.

2. The Story of Māra

200. The Teacher, while dwelling at Pañcasālā, the brahmin village, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to Māra, beginning with "Very happily indeed we live."

For one day the Teacher, having seen the decisive support for the path of stream-entry of five hundred young girls, dwelt in dependence on that village. Those young girls too, on a certain festival day, having gone to the river, having bathed, adorned and prepared, set out facing the village. The Teacher too, having entered that village, goes for almsfood. Then Māra, having possessed the bodies of all the village inhabitants, having acted in such a way that the Teacher did not obtain even a ladleful of food, standing at the village entrance as the Teacher was coming out with his bowl as washed, said - "Have you, ascetic, obtained almsfood?" "But did you, Evil One, act in such a way that I would not obtain almsfood?" "If so, venerable sir, enter again." For thus it occurred to him - "If he enters again, having possessed the bodies of all, I shall clap hands before him and make a laughing sport." At that moment those young girls, having reached the village entrance, having seen the Teacher, having paid homage, stood to one side. Māra too said to the Teacher - "Have you, venerable sir, not obtaining almsfood, been afflicted by the suffering of hunger?" The

Teacher, having said "Today we, Evil One, even without obtaining anything, shall spend the time with just joy and happiness, like the Great Brahmās in the radiant world," spoke this verse -

200. "Very happily indeed we live, we who have nothing;
We shall be feeders on rapture, like the radiant gods."

Therein, "we who have" means for us, among the possessions such as lust and so on, in the sense of obstructing, there is not even a single possession. "Feeders on rapture" means just as the radiant gods, being feeders on rapture, spend their time with just joy and happiness, so we too, Evil One, even without obtaining anything, shall be feeders on rapture - this is the meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, all five hundred young girls became established in the fruition of stream-entry.

The story of Māra is the second.

3. The Story of the Defeat of the King of Kosala

201. The Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to the defeat of the king of Kosala, beginning with "Winning, one begets enmity."

It is said that he, fighting together with his nephew Ajātasattu in dependence on the village of Kāsi, was defeated by him on three occasions, and on the third occasion he thought - "I was not able to defeat even a child still at the breast; what is the use of my life?" He, having made an arrest of food, lay down on the small bed. Then that news of his spread throughout the entire city. The monks reported to the Truth-finder - "Venerable sir, the king, it is said, was defeated three times in dependence on the village of Kāsi, and he, having now been defeated, has come back and, thinking 'I was not able to defeat even a child still at the breast; what is the use of my life?' having made an arrest of food, is lying down on the small bed." The Teacher, having heard their talk, having said "Monks, even the one who conquers begets enmity, but the defeated one simply sleeps in suffering," spoke this verse -

201. "Winning, one begets enmity; the defeated one sleeps in suffering;
The peaceful one sleeps happily, having abandoned victory and defeat."

Therein, "winning" means the one who conquers another obtains enmity. "The defeated one" means one defeated by another, thinking "When indeed shall I be able to see the back of my adversary?" sleeps in suffering; the meaning is that one dwells only in suffering in all postures. "The peaceful one" means one whose mental defilements of lust and so on are inwardly calmed, one who has eliminated the mental corruptions, having abandoned both victory and defeat, sleeps happily; the meaning is that one dwells only in happiness in all postures.

At the conclusion of the teaching, many attained the fruition of stream-entry and so on.

The story of the defeat of the king of Kosala is the third.

4. The Story of a Certain Girl of Good Family

202. "There is no fire like lust": the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to a certain girl of good family.

It is said that her mother and father, having arranged the marriage, on the festive day invited the Teacher. The Teacher, surrounded by the community of monks, having gone there, sat down. That young wife too, performing such duties as straining water for the community of monks, moved back and forth. Her husband too stood looking at her. As he was looking at her through the influence of lust, mental defilement occurred within him. He, overcome by not knowing, neither attended upon the Buddha nor the eighty great elders. Having stretched out his hand, he made up his mind "I shall seize that young wife." The Teacher, having looked at his disposition, made it so that he could not see that woman. He, not seeing her, stood looking at the Teacher. The Teacher, having looked at him as he stood there, having said "Young man, indeed there is no fire like the fire of lust, there is no misfortune like the misfortune of hate, there is no suffering like the suffering of carrying around the aggregates, and there is no happiness like the happiness of Nibbāna," spoke this verse -

202. "There is no fire like lust, there is no misfortune like hate;
There is no suffering like the aggregates, there is no happiness beyond
peace."

Therein, "there is no fire like lust" means there is no other fire like lust that is able to burn up internally without showing smoke or flame or embers, and reduce to a handful of ashes. "Misfortune" means there is no transgression either equal to hate. "Like the aggregates" means similar to the aggregates. Just as the aggregates being carried around are suffering, so there is no other suffering. "Beyond peace" means there is no other happiness beyond Nibbāna. For other happiness is merely happiness; Nibbāna is the highest bliss - this is the meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, both the young girl and the young man became established in the fruition of stream-entry. At that time the Blessed One brought about the manner of their seeing one another.

The story of a certain girl of good family is the fourth.

5. The Story of a Certain Lay Follower

203. The Teacher, while dwelling at Āḷavī, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to a certain lay follower, beginning with "Hunger."

For on one day, the Teacher, while just seated in the perfumed chamber at Jeta's Grove, towards the break of dawn, surveying the world, having seen a certain poor man at Āḷavī, having known the achievement of his decisive support, attended by five hundred monks, went to Āḷavī. The residents of Āḷavī invited the Teacher. That poor man too, having heard "The Teacher, it is said, has arrived," made up his mind "I shall listen to the Teaching in the presence of the Teacher." And on that very day one of his bulls ran away. He, having thought "Shall I search for the bull, or shall I listen to the Teaching?" thinking "Having searched for the bull, I shall listen to the Teaching afterwards," went out from the house right early. The residents of Āḷavī too, having

caused the community of monks headed by the Buddha to sit down, having served them with food, took the bowl for the purpose of thanksgiving. The Teacher, thinking "The one on whose account I have come a journey of thirty yojanas has entered the forest to search for the bull; I shall expound the Teaching only when he has come," remained silent.

That man too, having seen the bull during the day, having put it into the herd of cattle, thinking "Even if there is nothing else, I shall at least pay homage to the Teacher," though oppressed by hunger, without making up his mind to go home, with speed having come to the Teacher's presence, having paid homage to the Teacher, stood to one side. The Teacher, when he was standing, said to the attendant of the gift - "Is there any leftover food for the community of monks?" "Venerable sir, there is everything." "Then serve this man with food." He, at the very place stated by the Teacher, having caused him to sit down, carefully served him with rice gruel, solid food, and soft food. He, having eaten his meal, rinsed his mouth. It is said that apart from this instance, nowhere else in the three Canons is there an enquiry about food for one who has come and gone. When his disturbance had been calmed, his mind became fully focused. Then the Teacher, having given him a progressive discourse, made known the truths. He, at the conclusion of the teaching, became established in the fruition of stream-entry. The Teacher too, having given thanksgiving, rose from his seat and departed. The great multitude, having followed the Teacher, turned back.

The monks, while going together with the Teacher, grumbled - "Look, friends, at the Teacher's deed; on other days there is nothing of this sort, but today, having seen just one man, he enquired about rice gruel and so on and had them given." The Teacher, having turned back and stood right there, having asked "What are you discussing, monks?" having heard that matter, said "Yes, monks, I, coming through a wilderness of thirty yojanas, have come having seen the decisive support of that lay follower. He was exceedingly hungry; from right early he wandered in the forest searching for the bull. Having thought 'Due to the suffering of hunger, even when the Teaching is being taught, he will not be able to penetrate it,' I acted thus. There is no disease like the disease of hunger" - and having said this, he spoke this verse -

203. "Hunger is the supreme disease, activities are the supreme suffering;
Having known this as it really is, Nibbāna is the highest bliss."

Therein, "hunger is the supreme disease" means since another disease, once treated, either perishes or is abandoned by way of substitution of opposites, but hunger must always be treated - therefore this is called the supreme among the remaining diseases. "Activities" means the five aggregates. "Having known this" means there is no disease equal to hunger, there is no suffering equal to the maintaining of the aggregates - having known this meaning as it really is, the wise person realises Nibbāna. "Nibbāna is the highest bliss" - the meaning is that it is indeed the supreme, the highest bliss of all blisses.

At the conclusion of the teaching, many attained the fruition of stream-entry and so on.

The story of a certain lay follower is the fifth.

6. The Story of Pasenadi of Kosala

204. "Health is the highest gain" - the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to King Pasenadi of Kosala.

For on one occasion the king ate cooked rice of a doṇa-measure of rice-grain with a corresponding amount of lentil curry and vegetables. One day, having eaten his morning meal, without having dispelled the drowsiness after the meal, having gone to the Teacher's presence, in a state of exhaustion he tossed about here and there, and even though being overcome by sleepiness, being unable to lie down straight, he sat down to one side. Then the Teacher said to him - "What, great king, have you come without resting?" "Yes, venerable sir, from the time of eating I have great suffering." Then the Teacher, having said to him "Great king, excessive eating brings such suffering," spoke this verse -

"When one is torpid and gluttonous,
A sleeper who lies tossing about;
Like a great hog fed on fodder,
The fool enters the womb again and again."

Having exhorted with this verse, "Great king, food should be eaten in moderation. For one who eats moderately there is happiness" - further exhorting, he spoke this verse -

"For a person who is always mindful,
Who knows moderation in food obtained;
For him feelings become slight,
He ages slowly, protecting his life."

The king was not able to learn the verse, but he said to his nephew, a young man named Sudassana, standing nearby, "Learn this verse, dear son." He, having learnt that verse, asked the Teacher "What shall I do, venerable sir?" Then the Teacher said to him - "At the time of the king's last morsel while he is eating, you should recite this verse. The king, having considered the meaning, whatever morsel he will throw away, by counting the grains of rice in that morsel, at the time of cooking the king's meal, you should take away just that much rice-grain." He, saying "Good, venerable sir," both in the evening and in the morning, at the time of the king's last morsel while he was eating, having recited that verse, by counting the grains of rice in the morsel thrown away by him, he reduced the rice-grain. The king too, having heard that verse, had a thousand given each time. He, at a later time, having settled on a nāḷi-measure of rice at most, attained happiness and became slender in body.

Then one day, having gone to the Teacher's presence, having paid homage to the Teacher, he said - "Venerable sir, now happiness has arisen for me; I have become capable of pursuing and catching even deer and horses. Formerly there was nothing but conflict between me and my nephew; now, having given a daughter named Princess Vajīrā to my nephew, that village was given to her as a provision for her bathing powder, the strife with him has been allayed; by this reason too only happiness has arisen for me. The royal gem-jewel belonging to our family was lost in our house the other day; that too has now come to hand; by this reason too only

happiness has arisen for me. Wishing for trust with your disciples, a kinswoman's daughter too has been taken into our house; by this reason too only happiness has arisen for me." The Teacher, having said "Health, great king, is the highest gain; there is no wealth comparable to the state of contentment with whatever is obtained, no relative comparable to trust, and no happiness comparable to Nibbāna," spoke this verse -

204. "Health is the highest gain, contentment is the supreme wealth;
Trust is the highest relative, Nibbāna is the highest bliss."

Therein, "health is the highest gain" means gains for which health is the highest. For indeed, even existing gains for one who is ill are as good as no gain; therefore for one who is healthy, all gains are as if already obtained. Therefore this was said - "Health is the highest gain." "Contentment is the supreme wealth" means whether for a householder or for one gone forth, whatever has been obtained by oneself, one's own property - the state of being satisfied with just that, called contentment, is the supreme wealth among all other forms of wealth. "Trust is the highest relative" means whether it be one's mother or father, one with whom there is no trust is just as an unrelated person. But an unrelated person with whom there is trust, even though not connected by kinship, is the supreme, highest relative. Therefore it was said - "Trust is the highest relative." But there is no happiness equal to Nibbāna; therefore he said - "Nibbāna is the highest bliss."

At the conclusion of the teaching, many attained the fruition of stream-entry and so on.

The story of Pasenadi of Kosala is the sixth.

7. The Story of the Elder Monk Tissa

205. "The flavour of solitude": the Teacher, while dwelling at Vesālī, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to a certain monk.

For when the Teacher said "Monks, I shall attain final Nibbāna after four months from now," seven hundred monks experienced terror in the Teacher's presence, religious emotion arose among those who had eliminated the mental corruptions, and the worldlings were not able to hold back their tears. The monks, having formed into groups upon groups, went about consulting "What indeed shall we do?" Then a certain monk, an elder named Tissa, thinking "The Teacher, it is said, will attain final Nibbāna after the elapse of four months; and I am not free from lust; while the Teacher is still living, it is fitting for me to attain arahantship," dwelt alone in the four postures. There was no going to the presence of the monks or friendly conversation with anyone. Then the monks said to him - "Friend Tissa, why do you act thus?" He did not listen to their talk. They, having reported his conduct to the Teacher, said "Venerable sir, the Elder Tissa has no affection for you." The Teacher, having had him summoned, having asked "Why, Tissa, did you act thus?" when his intention was reported by him, having given applause saying "Good, Tissa!" said "Monks, let affection for me be just like that of Tissa. Even those who make offerings with scents, garlands and so on do not indeed venerate me; but those who proceed in accordance with the Teaching venerate me" - and having said this, he spoke this verse -

205. "Having drunk the flavour of solitude, and the flavour of peace;
One becomes free from anguish, sinless, drinking the flavour of joy in the
Dhamma."

Therein, "the flavour of solitude" means the flavour arisen from solitude; the meaning is the happiness of being alone. "Having drunk" means having drunk by way of realisation through the object, while performing the full understanding of suffering and so on. "And of peace" means having drunk the flavour of Nibbāna, which is the peace of mental defilements. "Becomes free from anguish" means by that drinking of both flavours, a monk who has eliminated the mental corruptions becomes free from anguish and sinless, due to the absence of lust, disturbance and so on within. "Drinking the flavour" means even while drinking the flavour of joy arisen by way of the ninefold supramundane Teaching, one becomes free from anguish and sinless.

At the conclusion of the teaching, the Elder Tissa attained arahantship. The proclamation of the Teaching was beneficial for the great multitude as well.

The story of the Elder Monk Tissa is the seventh.

8. The Story of Sakka

206-208. "Good is the seeing": the Teacher, while dwelling at the village of Veḷuva, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to Sakka.

For when the Truth-finder had relinquished the life principle, having known of the arising of the disease of bloody diarrhoea, Sakka, the king of gods, having thought "It is fitting for me to go to the Teacher's presence and perform attendance on the sick," having abandoned his body measuring three leagues, having approached the Teacher, rubbed his feet with his hands. Then the Teacher said to him "Who is this?" "I, venerable sir, am Sakka." "Why have you come?" "To attend upon you who are sick, venerable sir." "Sakka, for the gods the smell of humans, beginning from a hundred yojanas, is like a corpse tied to the throat. Go you, I have monks who are attendants of the sick." "Venerable sir, standing at the summit of eighty-four thousand yojanas, having smelled the fragrance of your morality, I have come. I myself shall attend upon you." He, not allowing even another's hand to touch the vessel for the Teacher's bodily discharge, having placed it on his very head and carrying it out, did not make even so much as a grimace of the face; he was as if carrying about a vessel of fragrance. Having thus looked after the Teacher, he departed only when the Teacher was comfortable.

The monks raised up a discussion: "Alas, the affection of Sakka for the Teacher! Having abandoned such divine success, without making even so much as a grimace of the face, carrying out the vessel for the Teacher's bodily discharge on his head as if carrying out a vessel of fragrance, he performed attendance." The Teacher, having heard their talk, said: What do you say, monks? This is not wonderful, that Sakka, the king of gods, shows affection towards me. For this Sakka, the king of gods, in dependence on me, having abandoned the state of the old Sakka, having become a stream-enterer, attained the state of the young Sakka. For when he, frightened by the fear of death, having placed the gandhabba god's son Pañcasikha in front, came, I, while he was seated in the midst of the assembly of gods in the Indasāla cave -

"Ask me a question, Vāsava, whatever you wish in your mind;
For each and every question, I shall make an end of it for you."

Having said this, dispelling his uncertainty, I expounded the Teaching. At the conclusion of the teaching, there was full realisation of the teaching for fourteen crores of living beings, and Sakka too, just as he was seated, having attained the fruition of stream-entry, became the young Sakka. Thus I am of great help to him. His affection towards me is not wonderful. Monks, for indeed even the seeing of the noble ones is pleasant, and association with them in one place is also pleasant. But with fools all this is suffering - having said this, he spoke these verses:

206. "Good is the seeing of the noble ones, association is always pleasant;
By not seeing the foolish, one would be ever happy.

207. "For one who associates with fools grieves for a long course;
Painful is communion with fools, as with an enemy always;
But the wise is pleasant to live with, like a meeting of relatives."

Therefore -

208. "The wise one, the one with wisdom, the very learned, one of burden-bearing nature, observant of religious duties, a noble one;
Such a good person, a wise one, one should associate with, as the moon with the path of the stars."

Therein, "good" means beautiful, excellent. "Association" means not only the seeing of them alone, but also the state of sitting together with them in one place and so on, and also the state of being able to perform all kinds of duties for them, is good indeed. "One who associates with fools" means one who is a companion of a fool. "For a long course" means he, being told by a foolish companion "Come, let us commit burglary and so on," having become of one accord with him and doing those things, having met with cutting of hands and so on, grieves for a long course. "Always" means just as dwelling together with an enemy with sword in hand or with venomous snakes and so on is always painful, so too with fools - this is the meaning. "But the wise is pleasant to live with" - here, "pleasant to live with" means one by whom the living together is pleasant; the meaning is that living together with a wise person in one place is pleasant. How? "Like a meeting of relatives" means just as a meeting of relatives is pleasant, so it is pleasant.

"Therefore indeed" means because living together with fools is painful and with a wise person is pleasant, therefore indeed one accomplished in energy - the wise one, one accomplished in mundane and supramundane wisdom - the one with wisdom, one accomplished in scriptural learning and realisation - the very learned, one of burden-bearing nature through the quality of bearing the burden reckoned as the attainment of arahantship, observant of religious duties through the observance of morality and the observance of ascetic practices, noble through being far from mental defilements, such a good person of beautiful wisdom - just as the moon associates with the stainless sky reckoned as the path of the stars, so one should associate with, one should attend upon - this is the meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, many attained the fruition of stream-entry and so on.

The story of Sakka is the eighth.

The explanation of the Chapter on Happiness is finished.

The fifteenth chapter.



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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