

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)

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[Thig 16.1, PTS 168-174]



PaliVerse

5. The Collection of Minor Texts

09. Verses of the Elder Nuns

16. The Great Book

1. Verses of the Elder Nun Sumedhā

- 450.** In the city of Mantāvātī, of King Koñca's chief queen;
I was the daughter Sumedhā, gladdened by those who practise the teaching.
- 451.** Virtuous, of varied discourse, very learned, disciplined in the Buddha's teaching;
Having approached her mother and father, she speaks: "Both of you, listen.
- 452.** "I am fond of Nibbāna, non-eternal is existence even if divine;
How much less then hollow sensual pleasures, of little enjoyment and much vexation.
- 453.** "Sensual pleasures are bitter, like venomous snakes, in which fools are infatuated;
They, consigned to hell for a long time, are afflicted and destroyed.
- 454.** "Those of evil deeds grieve, in the nether world, ever increasing in evil;
Unrestrained by body and by speech, and by mind, the foolish.
- 455.** "Those fools are unwise, senseless, obstructed by the origin of suffering;
Not knowing when it is being taught, they do not understand the noble truths.
- 456.** "The truths, mother, taught by the Excellent Buddha, those who do not know them are the majority;
They delight in existence, they long for rebirth among the gods.
- 457.** "Even rebirth among the gods is non-eternal, in existence that is impermanent;
Yet fools do not tremble, at being born again and again.
- 458.** "The four nether worlds, and the two destinations are obtained with difficulty;
And for those gone to the nether worlds, there is no going forth in the hells.
- 459.** "Both of you, allow me to go forth in the teaching of the Ten-Powered One;
Living at ease, I shall strive for the abandoning of birth and death.
- 460.** "What is the use of rejoicing in existence, in this body, a heap of misery, without substance;
For the cessation of craving for existence, allow me, I shall go forth.
- 461.** "The arising of Buddhas has been avoided, the inopportune moment, the

moment has been obtained;
The moralities, the holy life, for as long as life lasts I would not corrupt."

- 462.** Thus speaks Sumedhā to her mother and father: "I will not take food so long;
As a householder, I shall be one gone under the power of death."
- 463.** The mother, afflicted, weeps, and the father, his face altogether stricken with tears;
They strive to convince her, fallen on the ground on the upper floor of the mansion.
- 464.** "Get up, dear child, what is the use of grieving? You have been given to Vāraṇavatī;
King Anīkaratta is handsome, to him you have been given.
- 465.** "You will become the chief queen, the wife of King Anikaratta;
The moralities, the holy life, going forth is difficult to do, dear son.
- 466.** "In the kingdom there is command, wealth and sovereignty, pleasures are pleasant, you are young;
Enjoy sensual pleasures, let there be a proposal of marriage for you, child."
- 467.** Then Sumedhā speaks to them: "Let there not be such things, existence is without substance;
Either there will be going forth, or death for me - I will certainly not accept a proposal of marriage."
- 468.** "Why would I, like a worm, enter this putrid body, impure, with the odour of discharge, a frightful corpse,
A bellows, more than once trickling, full of impurity?
- 469.** "Why would I, knowing this, like a worm, smeared with flesh and blood,
A dwelling for a multitude of worms, food for birds - why is this corpse given?
- 470.** "It is carried to the cemetery, before long this body devoid of consciousness;
Discarded like a log, by relatives who are disgusted.
- 471.** "Having thrown it away in the cemetery, food for others, they bathe in disgust;
Even one's own mother and father, how much more then the common populace.
- 472.** "Attached to the unessential, to the body, a combination of bones and sinews;
Full of spittle, excrement, and urine, in the putrid body.
- 473.** "Whoever, having separated it, would turn its inside outward;
Not enduring the odour, even one's own mother would be disgusted.
- 474.** "Aggregates, elements, sense bases, conditioned, rooted in birth, suffering;
Wisely investigating, why should I wish for a proposal of marriage?
- 475.** "Day by day three hundred spears, ever fresh, might fall upon the body;

Even a hundred years of slaughter would be better, if thus there were elimination of suffering.

- 476.** "One should accept slaughter, having thus understood the Teacher's word;
'Long is the wandering in the round of rebirths for those being slain again and again.'
- 477.** Among gods and human beings, in the animal realm and the titan host;
Among ghosts and in the hells, countless destructions are seen.
- 478.** "Many are the destructions in the hells, for one gone to the nether worlds,
being oppressed;
Even among the gods there is no protection, there is nothing beyond the
happiness of Nibbāna.
- 479.** "They have attained Nibbāna, those who are devoted to the teaching of the
Ten-Powered One;
Living at ease, they strive for the abandoning of birth and death.
- 480.** "This very day, father, I shall go forth; what use are possessions without
substance?
Sensual pleasures are wearisome to me, like vomit, made like the site of a
palm tree."
- 481.** She thus speaks to her father, and Anīkaratta to whom she was given;
He approached Vāraṇavatī, when the time for the marriage proposal had
arrived.
- 482.** Then Sumedhā, having cut with a sword her hair, black, thick, and soft;
Having closed the mansion, she attained the first meditative absorption.
- 483.** And while she was attained there, Anīkaratta came to the city;
And in the mansion Sumedhā well develops the perception of impermanence.
- 484.** And while she attends in mind, Anīkaratta ascended quickly;
With limbs adorned with jewels and gold, with joined palms he requests
Sumedhā.
- 485.** "In the kingdom there is command, wealth and sovereignty, pleasures are
pleasant, you are young;
Enjoy sensual pleasures, sensual happiness is rare in the world.
- 486.** "The kingdom has been handed over to you, enjoy the wealth, give gifts;
Do not be unhappy, your mother and father are distressed."
- 487.** To him Sumedhā speaks, not desiring sensual pleasures, with delusion gone:
"Do not delight in sensual pleasures, see the danger in sensual pleasures.
- 488.** "King Mandhātā, ruler of the four continents, was the foremost among those
who enjoy sensual pleasures;

Unsatisfied he died, and his desire was not fulfilled.

- 489.** "Even if the seven treasures were to rain down, the rain-cloud spreading over the ten directions all around;
There is no satisfaction in sensual pleasures, men die unsatisfied.
- 490.** "Sensual pleasures are like a butcher's block, sensual pleasures are like a snake's head;
Like a torch they burn, resembling a skeleton.
- 491.** "Sensual pleasures are impermanent, unstable, having much suffering, great poison;
Like a heated iron ball, they are the root of misery, with suffering as their fruit.
- 492.** "Sensual pleasures are like tree fruits, like a slice of flesh, painful;
Like a dream, deceptive, sensual pleasures are like borrowed goods.
- 493.** "Sensual pleasures are like stakes of spears, disease, boil, misery, trouble;
Like a pit of embers, root of misery, fear, murder.
- 494.** "Thus sensual pleasures have much suffering, declared as obstructive;
Go, I have no trust in existence for myself.
- 495.** "What will another do for me, when my own head is burning?
When ageing and death are pursuing, one must strive for its destruction."
- 496.** Having opened the door, I saw my mother and father and Anīkaratta;
Seated on the ground, weeping, I said this.
- 497.** "Long is the wandering in the round of rebirths for the foolish, and for those weeping again and again;
Without discernible beginning, at the death of a father, at the murder of a brother, and at the murder of oneself.
- 498.** "Tears, mother's milk, blood, the round of rebirths without discernible beginning, remember;
Of beings transmigrating, remember also the accumulation of bones.
- 499.** Remember the four oceans, brought as comparison for tears, mother's milk, and blood;
Remember the accumulation of bones of one cosmic cycle, equal to Vipula.
- 500.** "For one transmigrating without discernible beginning, the earth of the Indian subcontinent brought forth;
As pills the size of jujube seeds, mothers of mothers alone would not suffice.
- 501.** "Grass, sticks, branches and leaves, brought as comparison from without discernible beginning, remember;
As four-finger-length pieces, fathers of fathers alone would not suffice.

- 502.** Remember the blind turtle in the eastern ocean, and the yoke-hole from the west;
And its head inserted into it - this is the simile for obtaining human birth.
- 503.** "Remember the materiality like a lump of foam, of the body, without substance;
See the aggregates as impermanent, remember the hells with much vexation.
- 504.** Remember those increasing the cemetery, again and again in those various births;
Remember the crocodile dangers, remember the four truths.
- 505.** "When the Deathless exists, what use to you is the five-fold bitter drink;
For all sensual delights are more bitter than the five-fold bitter.
- 506.** "When the Deathless exists, what use to you are sensual pleasures, which are fevers;
For all sensual delights are blazing, boiling, agitating, and tormenting.
- 507.** "When the state without enmity exists, what use to you are sensual pleasures, which have many enemies;
Sensual pleasures are common to kings, fire, thieves, water, and unloved heirs, having many enemies.
- 508.** "When freedom exists, what use to you are sensual pleasures, in which there is murder and bondage;
For in sensual pleasures, those attached to unwholesome pleasures experience the sufferings of murder and bondage.
- 509.** "A blazing grass torch burns the one who grasps it, not the one who releases it;
For sensual pleasures are like a torch, they burn those who do not release them.
- 510.** "Do not, for the sake of little sensual happiness, give up abundant happiness;
Do not, like a fish swallowing a hook, afterwards suffer vexation.
- 511.** "Surely, tame yourself in sensual pleasures, so long as you are like a dog bound by a chain;
Sensual pleasures will do to you what hungry outcasts do to a dog.
- 512.** "Unlimited suffering and many mental displeasures;
You will experience, being attached to sensual pleasures; give up the unstable sensual pleasures.
- 513.** "When the ageless exists, what use to you are sensual pleasures, in which there is ageing;
Seized by death and illness, are all births everywhere.
- 514.** "This is ageless, this is deathless, this is the ageless and deathless state, free from sorrow;

Without enmity, without confinement, without stumbling, without fear, without distress.

- 515.** "This has been attained by many, the Deathless, and even today this can be obtained;
By one who wisely applies oneself, but it is not possible for one not striving."
- 516.** Thus speaks Sumedhā, not finding delight in what is subject to activities;
Persuading Anikaratta, Sumedhā threw her hair on the ground.
- 517.** Having risen, Anīkaratta, with joined palms, requested her father;
"Give up Sumedhā, to go forth, may she see the truth of deliverance."
- 518.** Released by her mother and father, she went forth, frightened by the fear of sorrow;
The six direct knowledges were realised, the highest fruition for her as a female trainee.
- 519.** Wonderful and marvellous was that Nibbāna of the princess;
Her past life conduct, as she declared at the final time.
- 520.** "In the time of the Blessed One Koṇāgamana, in a newly established monastery for the Community;
We three friends, women, gave the gift of a dwelling."
- 521.** "Ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times, and ten thousand times;
We were reborn among the gods, what then to say of among human beings.
- 522.** "Among the gods we were of great supernormal power, what then to say of in the human realm;
I was the chief queen of one with the seven treasures, I was the woman treasure.
- 523.** "That is the cause, that is the production, that is the root, that same is the acceptance in the Dispensation;
That is the first combination, that is Nibbāna for one delighted in the Dhamma."
- 524.** Thus do those who believe the word of the one of superior wisdom;
They become disenchanted with existence, and having become disenchanted, they become dispassionate.

Thus the Elder Nun Sumedhā spoke these verses.

The Great Book is concluded.

The Verses of the Elder Nuns are complete.

Four hundred verses, eighty and fourteen more;
One hundred and one senior nuns, all of them with the elimination of mental corruptions.

The Therīgāthā Pāḷi 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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