

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā)

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

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

19. The Chapter on the Righteous

1. The Story of the Chief Minister of Judgment

256-257. "One is not righteous by that" - the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to the chief ministers of judgment.

For one day, monks, having walked for almsfood in the village at the northern gate in Sāvattthī, having returned from their alms round, were coming to the monastery through the middle of the city. At that moment a cloud arose and rained. They, having entered the judgment hall that had come before them, having seen the chief ministers of judgment accepting bribes and making owners into non-owners, having thought "Alas, these are unrighteous! But we had the perception that 'these are making judgments by the rule,'" when the rain had passed, having gone to the monastery, having paid homage to the Teacher, seated to one side, they reported that matter. The Teacher, having said "Monks, those who, being swayed by desire and so on, decide cases forcibly, are not called righteous; but those who, having investigated the offence, make judgments in accordance with the offence, without violence, are indeed called righteous," spoke these verses -

256. "One is not righteous by that, by which one decides a case forcibly;
But whoever, being wise, discriminates both benefit and harm.

257. "Without violence, by the rule, righteously he decides for others;
Protected by the Teaching, the wise one is called 'righteous.'"

Therein, "by that" means by just this much reason alone. "Righteous" means even a king established in the principle of judgment that is to be carried out by himself is not called righteous. "By which" means by whatever reason. "A case" means a case that has come down and is to be judged. "Decides forcibly" means one established in desire and so on would judge forcibly, by lying. For whoever, having been established in desire, having spoken falsely saying "He is a relative" or "He is a friend," makes one who is not the owner into the owner; having been established in hate, having spoken falsely against his own enemies, makes the owner into a non-owner; having been established in delusion, having accepted a bribe, at the time of judgment, as if thinking about something else, looking here and there, having spoken falsely, removes the other party saying "This one has won, that one is defeated"; having been established in fear, even for one of lordly birth who is reaching defeat, imposes victory - this one is said to decide a case forcibly. The meaning is that this one is not called righteous. "Benefit and harm" means the factual and the non-factual cause. "Discriminates both" means but whatever wise person, having investigated both benefit and harm, speaks. "Without violence" means without lying. "By the rule" means by the principle of judgment, not by the power of desire and so on.

"Righteously" means he decides for others in accordance with the offence alone, causing them to reach either victory or defeat. "Protected by the Teaching" means he, protected by the Teaching, guarded by the Teaching, endowed with wisdom nourished by the Teaching, the wise one, because of being established in the principle of judgment, is called "righteous" - this is the meaning.

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

The story of the chief minister of judgment is the first.

2. The Story of the Group of Six

258. "One is not wise by that" - the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to the group of six monks.

They, it is said, go about causing confusion in the refectory both in the monastery and in the village. Then one day the monks asked the young novices who had come back after doing the meal duty in the village - "What was the refectory like, friends?"

"Venerable sirs, do not ask. The group of six monks, having said 'We alone are the experienced ones, we alone are the wise ones; we shall strike these ones, scatter rubbish on their heads, and throw them out,' having seized us by the back, scattering rubbish, made the refectory confused." The monks, having gone to the Teacher's presence, reported that matter. The Teacher, having said "I do not, monks, call one who speaks much and harasses others 'wise'; but one who enjoys security, free from enmity, fearless - him I call wise," spoke this verse -

258. "One is not wise by that, by which one speaks much;
One who enjoys security, free from enmity, fearless, is called 'wise'."

Therein, "by which" means by whatever reason one speaks much in the midst of the Community and so on, by that one is not called wise. But whoever himself enjoys security, free from enmity through the absence of the five enmities, fearless, or on account of whom there is no fear for the public - he is called wise; this is the meaning.

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

The story of the group of six is the second.

3. The Story of the Elder Monk Who Was One Who Eliminated the Mental Corruptions with a Single Inspired Utterance

259. The Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to an elder monk named Ekudāna, one who had eliminated the mental corruptions, beginning with "Not by that much."

It is said that he dwelt alone in a certain jungle thicket, and he had learnt by heart just one inspired utterance -

"For one of higher consciousness, not negligent,
A sage training in the paths of wisdom;

Sorrows do not exist for such a one,
Who is at peace, always mindful."

It is said that on Observance days he himself, having announced the hearing of the Teaching, recites this verse. The sound of applause of the deities was like the sound of the earth's faculties breaking. Then on a certain Observance day, two monks who were bearers of the Triple Canon, each with a retinue of five hundred, went to his dwelling place. He, having seen them, with a satisfied mind, said "A good thing has been done by you in coming here; today we shall listen to the Teaching from you." "But is there anyone here, friend, willing to hear the Teaching?" "There is, venerable sir; on the day for hearing the Teaching, this jungle thicket is one resounding sound with the sound of applause of the deities." Among them, one bearer of the Triple Canon reinstated the Teaching, one spoke. Not even one deity gave applause. They said - "You, friend, say that on the day for hearing the Teaching the deities in this jungle thicket give applause with a loud sound; what is the meaning of this?" "Venerable sir, on other days there is indeed one resounding sound with the sound of applause, but today I do not know what this is." "If so, friend, you then speak the Teaching." He, having taken a fan, seated on the seat, recited that very same verse. The deities gave applause with a loud sound. Then their retinue monks grumbled: "In this jungle thicket the deities give applause by looking at faces; even though the monks who are bearers of the Triple Canon spoke so much, without uttering even the slightest word of praise, when a single verse was spoken by one old elder monk, they give applause with a loud sound." They too, having gone to the monastery, reported that matter to the Teacher.

The Teacher said "I do not, monks, call one who learns much or speaks much a bearer of the Teaching. But whoever, having learnt even a single verse, penetrates the truths - this one is called a bearer of the Teaching" - and expounding the Teaching, spoke this verse -

259. "One is not a bearer of the Teaching by that much, by which one speaks much;
But whoever, having heard even a little, sees the Teaching with the body;
He indeed is a bearer of the Teaching, whoever is not negligent of the
Teaching."

Therein, "by which" means by whatever reason of learning, retaining, reciting and so on one speaks much, by that much one is not a bearer of the Teaching, but one is called a guardian of the lineage, a preserver of the tradition. "But whoever, having heard even a little" means but whoever, having heard even a trifling amount, having followed the Teaching, having followed the meaning, having become one practising in accordance with the Teaching, fully understanding suffering and so on with the mental body, sees the Teaching of the four truths - he indeed is a bearer of the Teaching. "Whoever is not negligent of the Teaching" means whoever too, having become one putting forth strenuous energy, hoping for penetration thinking "today, today itself," is not negligent of the Teaching - this one too is indeed a bearer of the Teaching. This is the meaning.

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

The story of the elder monk who was one who eliminated the mental corruptions with a single inspired utterance is the third.

4. The Story of the Elder *Lakuṇḍakabhaddiya*

260-261. "One is not an elder by that" - the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to the Elder *Lakuṇḍakabhaddiya*.

For one day, just after that elder had gone to attend upon the Teacher and departed, about thirty forest-dwelling monks, while seeing him, having come, having paid homage to the Teacher, sat down. The Teacher, having seen their decisive support for arahantship, asked this question - "Did you see one elder monk gone from here?" "We did not see him, venerable sir." "But what was seen by you?" "We saw one novice, venerable sir." "He is not a novice, monks; he is indeed an elder monk." "He is very much small, venerable sir." "I do not, monks, call one an elder merely by old age or by sitting on an elder's seat. But whoever, having penetrated the truths, stands in the state of non-violence towards the great multitude, he is called an elder" - having said this, he spoke these verses -

260. "One is not an elder by that, by which one's head is grey;
His age is fully ripe, he is called 'one grown old in vain'.

261. "In whom there is truth and the Teaching, non-violence, self-control, taming;
He indeed, the wise one who has vomited stain, is called 'an elder'."

Therein, "fully ripe" means matured; the meaning is one who has reached the state of old age. "One grown old in vain" means one who is hollow-aged, due to the absence within of qualities that make one an elder. "In whom there is truth and the Teaching" means in whatever person there is the fourfold truth, because of having been penetrated in sixteen ways, and the ninefold supramundane Teaching, because of having been realised by knowledge. "Non-violence" means the state of non-harming. This is merely by way of the Teaching; but the meaning is that in whom there is the fourfold development of the boundless states. "Self-control" and "taming" means morality and sense restraint. "Who has vomited stain" means one whose stain has been removed by path knowledge. "Wise" means endowed with energy. "Elder" means he is called an elder because of being endowed with these factors that produce firmness; this is the meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, those monks became established in arahantship.

*The story of the Elder Monk *Lakuṇḍaka Bhaddiya* is the fourth.*

5. The Story of Several Monks

262-263. "Not by mere conversation" - the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to several monks.

For on one occasion, having seen young novices performing services such as dyeing of robes and so on for their own Teaching-teachers only, some elder monks thought - "We too are skilled in phrasing, yet there is nothing for us. What if we were to approach the Teacher and say thus: 'Venerable sir, we are skilled in phrasing; please command the young novices that even having learnt the Teaching in the presence of

others, they should not recite without having it checked in our presence.' For thus our material gain and honour will increase." They, having approached the Teacher, said thus.

The Teacher, having heard their words, having known "In this Dispensation one is entitled to say thus by way of tradition, but these are dependent on material gain and honour," said "I do not call you of good disposition by mere conversation. But for one in whom these mental states beginning with envy have been cut off by the path of arahantship, he alone is of good disposition" - having said this, he spoke these verses -

262. "Not by mere conversation, nor by beauty of complexion;
Is a man of good disposition, if envious, stingy, fraudulent.

263. "For one in whom this is cut off, destroyed at the root, uprooted;
He, having vomited out hate, the wise one, is called 'of good disposition.'"

Therein, "not by mere conversation" means by mere verbal making, by mere speech accomplished with the characteristics of sound. "Nor by beauty of complexion" means or by the agreeable state of bodily colour. "A man" means by just this much reason alone, a man who is jealous regarding the material gains and so on of others, possessed of stinginess of five kinds, fraudulent through the state of being deceitful, is not of good disposition. "For one in whom this" means for whatever person this group of faults beginning with envy is cut off including its root by the knowledge of the path of arahantship, uprooted having made the destruction of the root, he, having vomited out hate, endowed with wisdom nourished by the Teaching, is called "of good disposition" - this is the meaning.

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

The story of many monks is the fifth.

6. The Story of Hatthaka

264-265. "Not by a shaven head is one an ascetic": the Teacher, while dwelling at Sāvattihī, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to Hatthaka.

It is said that he, upset in disputation, having said "You should come to such and such a place at such and such a time; we shall have a debate," having gone there beforehand, having said such things as "Look, the sectarians have not come out of fear of me; this itself is their defeat," upset in disputation, evading one issue with another, he went about. The Teacher, having heard "It is said that Hatthaka acts thus," having had him summoned, having asked "Is it true, Hatthaka, that you act thus?" when it was said "True," said "Why do you act thus? For one who engages in such lying does not become an ascetic merely by shaving the head and so on. But whoever, having calmed evil things whether subtle or gross, stands thus - this one alone is an ascetic" - having said this, he spoke these verses -

264. "Not by a shaven head is one an ascetic, one without moral obligations,
speaking falsehood;
One possessed of desire and greed, how can he be an ascetic?

265. "But whoever calms evil things, subtle and gross, in every respect;
Because of the calming of evil things, one is called an ascetic."

Therein, "by a shaven head" means merely by the shaving of the head. "Without moral obligations" means devoid of the observance of morality and the observance of ascetic practices. "Speaking falsehood" means speaking lying; possessed of desire towards objects not attained and of greed towards those attained - how can one be called an ascetic? "Calms" means whoever appeases evil things whether small or great, he, because of the calming of those, is called an ascetic - this is the meaning.

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

The story of Hatthaka is the sixth.

7. The Story of a Certain Brahmin

266-267. "One is not a monk by that": the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to a certain brahmin.

It is said that he, having gone forth in an external doctrine, while going about for almsfood, thought - "The ascetic Gotama calls his own disciples 'monks' because of their conduct of going for alms; it is fitting to call me too a 'monk.'" He, having approached the Teacher, said "Master Gotama, I too live by going about for almsfood; call me too a 'monk.'" Then the Teacher said to him "I, brahmin, do not call one a monk merely by begging. For indeed, one who conducts himself having taken up a foul teaching is not called a monk. But whoever wanders with understanding among all activities, he is called a monk" - having said this, he spoke these verses -

266. "One is not a monk by that, by which one begs from others;
Having taken up a foul teaching, one is not a monk by that much.

267. "One who here, having expelled both merit and evil, lives the holy life;
Wanders in the world with understanding, he indeed is called a monk."

Therein, "by which" means by whatever one begs from others, by that mere begging one is not called a monk. "Foul" means unrighteous teaching, or one who conducts himself having taken up teaching of bodily action and so on that has the smell of raw flesh is not called a monk. "One who here" means whoever here in this Dispensation, having expelled and removed both of these - merit and evil - by the holy life of the path, is one who lives the holy life. "With understanding" means with knowledge. "In the world" means in the world of aggregates and so on, having known all phenomena thus "these are internal aggregates, these are external," he wanders; he, because of the breaking of mental defilements by that knowledge, is called a "monk" - this is the meaning.

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

The story of a certain brahmin is the seventh.

8. The Story of the Adherents of Another Religion

268-269. "Not by silence" - the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to the sectarians.

They, it is said, at the places where people had eaten, having spoken a blessing by the method beginning with "May there be security, may there be happiness, may your life span increase, at such and such a place there is mud, at such and such a place there is a thorn, it is not fitting to go to such a place," depart. But the monks, at the time of the first enlightenment, when thanksgiving and so on had not yet been allowed, depart from the refectory without giving thanksgiving to the people. The people grumbled: "We hear blessings from the sectarians, but the venerable ones depart in silence." The monks reported that matter to the Teacher. The Teacher allowed: "Monks, henceforth in the refectory and so on, give thanksgiving as you please, give a talk to those sitting nearby, expound the Teaching." They did so. The people, hearing the thanksgivings and so on, having reached enthusiasm, having invited the monks, go about showing honour. But the sectarians grumbled: "We practise the silence of sages, yet the disciples of the ascetic Gotama go about giving great talks in the refectory and so on."

The Teacher, having heard that matter, said: "I do not, monks, call one a 'sage' by mere silence. For some do not speak because of not knowing, some because of lack of confidence, some out of stinginess, thinking 'Let not others know this excellent matter of ours.' Therefore by mere silence one does not become a sage, but by the appeasement of evil one is indeed called a sage" - having said this, he spoke these verses -

268. "Not by silence does one become a sage, being foolish in appearance, unwise;
But whoever, as if holding up a balance, having taken the excellent, is wise.

269. "He shuns evil things, he is a sage, because of that he is a sage;
Whoever understands both worlds, he is called a sage because of that."

Therein, "not by silence" means although indeed one becomes a sage by the silence of path-knowledge reckoned as the practice of moral perfection, here however "by silence" is said with reference to mere quietness. "Foolish in appearance" means of hollow appearance. "Unwise" means unintelligent. For such a one, even though silent, is not called a sage. Or alternatively, by silence one is not called a sage, but is of hollow nature and unintelligent - this is the meaning. "But whoever, as if holding up a balance" means just as one standing having taken a balance, if there is excess, removes it. If there is deficiency, puts in more. Just so, whoever, as if removing the excess, removes and avoids evil, and as if putting into what is deficient, fulfils the wholesome. And doing thus, having taken the excellent, the highest indeed, reckoned as morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and knowledge and vision of liberation, he avoids evil things, unwholesome actions. "He is a sage" means he is called a sage - this is the meaning. "Because of that he is a sage" - but if one asks why is he a sage? The reason stated below, because of that he is a sage - this is the meaning. "He understands both worlds" means whatever person, in this world of aggregates and so on, as if placing upon a balance and measuring, understands both these

meanings by the method beginning with "these are internal aggregates, these are external." "He is called a sage because of that" means by that reason he is indeed called a sage - this is the meaning.

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

The story of the adherents of another religion is the eighth.

9. The Story of the Fisherman

270. "One is not noble by that" - the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to a certain fisherman named Ariya.

For one day the Teacher, having seen the decisive support for the path of stream-entry in him, having walked for almsfood in the village at the northern gate of Sāvattthī, surrounded by the community of monks, was coming from there. At that moment, that fisherman, while catching fish with a hook, having seen the community of monks headed by the Buddha, threw down his fishing rod and stood. The Teacher, having turned back and stood at a place not far from him, asked the names of the Elder Sāriputta and others, saying "What is your name?" They too told their own respective names, saying "I am Sāriputta, I am Moggallāna." The fisherman thought - "The Teacher is asking the names of all; he will ask my name too, I think." The Teacher, having known his wish, having asked "Lay follower, what is your name?" when it was said "I, venerable sir, am named Ariya," having said "No, lay follower, such killers of living beings are not noble ones; noble ones, however, stand in the state of non-violence towards the great multitude," he spoke this verse -

270. "One is not noble by that, by which one hurts living beings;
By non-violence towards all living beings, one is called 'noble.'"

Therein, "by non-violence" means by non-harming. This is what is meant - by which indeed one hurts living beings, one is not noble by that reason. But whoever, through non-harming of all living beings with the hand and so on, because of being established in the meditative development of friendliness and so on, stands far away from harming - he is called a noble one; this is the meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, the fisherman became established in the fruition of stream-entry, and the proclamation of the Teaching was beneficial for those who had assembled.

The story of the fisherman is the ninth.

10. The Story of the Many Monks Accomplished in Morality and So On

271-272. "Not by mere moral rules and austerities": the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to many monks accomplished in morality and so on.

Among them, it is said, for some this occurred - "We are accomplished in morality, we are observers of ascetic practices, we are very learned, we are dwellers in remote lodgings, we are attainers of meditative absorption; arahantship is not difficult to obtain for us; on whatever day we wish, we shall attain arahantship." Even those

among them who were non-returners, for them too this occurred - "Arahantship is not difficult to obtain for us now." They all, one day, having approached the Teacher, having paid homage, seated, when asked by the Teacher "Has the task of one gone forth reached its summit for you, monks?" said thus - "Venerable sir, we are of such and such a kind, therefore, having thought 'We are able to attain arahantship at whatever moment we wish,' we dwell."

The Teacher, having heard their words, having said "Monks, it is not proper for a monk by merely having pure morality and so on, or by merely having attained the happiness of a non-returner, to say 'Our suffering of existence is small'; but without having attained the elimination of mental corruptions, the thought 'I am happy' should not be produced," spoke these verses -

271. "Not by mere moral rules and austerities, nor by great learning;
Or by the attainment of concentration, or by secluded dwelling.
272. "I experience the happiness of renunciation, not frequented by worldlings;
A monk should not become complacent, not having attained the elimination of mental corruptions."

Therein, "by mere moral rules and austerities" means by merely the fourfold purification morality or by merely the thirteen ascetic practices. "Or by great learning" means or by merely having learnt the three Canons. "By the attainment of concentration" means by the attainment of the eight meditative attainments. "Happiness of renunciation" means the happiness of a non-returner. "I experience that happiness of a non-returner" - or by merely that much. "Not frequented by worldlings" means not frequented by worldlings, frequented only by noble ones. "Monk" - he said this addressing a certain one among them. "Should not become complacent" means should not come to trust. This is what is meant - A monk, by merely this state of being accomplished in morality and so on, thinking "My existence is small, insignificant," not having attained arahantship, which is reckoned as the elimination of mental corruptions, a monk should not come to trust. For just as even a small amount of excrement is foul-smelling, so even a small amount of existence is suffering.

At the conclusion of the teaching, those monks became established in arahantship. The proclamation of the Teaching was beneficial for those who had assembled as well.

The story of the many monks accomplished in morality and so on is the tenth.

The commentary on the Chapter on the Righteous is completed.

The nineteenth 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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