

# THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

*The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom*

## Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā)

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

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

02. Commentary on the Teaching in Verses (02. Dhammapada-  
aṭṭhakathā)

22. The Chapter on Hell (22. Nirayavaggo)



PaliVerse

## 5. The Collection of Minor Texts

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### 02. Commentary on the Teaching in Verses

## 22. The Chapter on Hell

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### 1. The Story of the Female Wandering Ascetic Sundarī

**306.** "One who speaks what is not factual" - the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to the female wandering ascetic Sundarī.

The story beginning with "Now at that time the Blessed One was honoured, respected, revered, venerated" has come in detail in the Udāna itself. Here, however, this is the summary - It is said that when material gain and honour resembling the great flood of five great rivers had arisen for the Blessed One and the Community of monks, the followers of other sects, their material gain and honour destroyed, like fireflies at the time of sunrise, having become without lustre, having assembled together, consulted - "From the time of the ascetic Gotama's arising, we have had our material gain and honour destroyed; no one even knows of our existence. Together with whom, having joined, could we arouse disrepute for the ascetic Gotama and cause his material gain and honour to disappear?" Then this occurred to them - "Having joined together with Sundarī, we shall be able to." One day they did not speak to Sundarī who had entered the sectarians' park, paid homage, and stood there. She, even though conversing again and again, not receiving a reply, asked "But, noble ladies, have you been harassed by someone?" "What, sister, do you not see the ascetic Gotama going about having harassed us and destroyed our material gain and honour?" "What is it fitting for me to do here?" "You indeed, sister, are lovely and endowed with splendour; having imputed ill repute to the ascetic Gotama, having made the great multitude accept your story, destroy his material gain and honour." She, having heard that, having accepted saying "Very well," departed. Thenceforth, having taken garlands, scents, ointments, camphor, pungent fruits and so on, in the evening, at the time when the great multitude, having heard the Teacher's proclamation of the Teaching, was entering the city, she goes facing towards Jeta's Grove. And when asked "Where are you going?" having said "I shall go to the presence of the ascetic Gotama; for I dwell together with him in one perfumed chamber," having stayed at a certain sectarians' park, right early, having descended onto the road to Jeta's Grove, coming facing towards the city, when asked "Well, Sundarī, where have you been?" she says "Having dwelt together with the ascetic Gotama in one perfumed chamber, having delighted him with the delight of defilements, I have come."

Then, after the lapse of a few days, having given coins to cheats, they said "Go, having killed Sundarī, having deposited her among the rubbish of garlands near the perfumed chamber of the ascetic Gotama, come." They did so. Thereupon the sectarians, having made an uproar saying "We do not see Sundarī," having reported to the king, when told "Where is your suspicion?" having said "During these days she

has been staying at Jeta's Grove; we do not know what has happened to her there," having been permitted by the king saying "If so, go, search for her," having taken their own attendants, having gone to Jeta's Grove, searching, having seen her among the rubbish of garlands, having placed her on a small bed, having brought her into the city, they reported to the king: "The disciples of the ascetic Gotama, thinking 'We shall conceal the evil deed done by the Teacher,' having killed Sundarī, deposited her among the rubbish of garlands." The king said "If so, go, wander about the city." They, having said in the city streets "See the deed of the ascetics, the disciples of the Sakyan" and so on, came again to the door of the king's residence. The king had the body of Sundarī placed on a scaffold at the charnel grove for fresh corpses and had it guarded. The inhabitants of Sāvattthī, except for the noble disciples, the rest, for the most part, having said "See the deed of the ascetics, the disciples of the Sakyan" and so on, went about reviling the monks both inside the city and outside the city. The monks reported that incident to the Truth-finder. The Teacher, having said "If so, you too reprove those people thus," spoke this verse -

306. "A liar goes to hell,  
And he who having done says 'I do not do';  
Both of them, after death, become equal,  
Human beings of low action in the hereafter."

Therein, "one who speaks what is not factual" means one who, without even having seen a fault of another, having committed lying, falsely accuses another with what is hollow. "Having done" means whoever, having done an evil deed, says "I do not do this." "After death become equal" means those two persons, having gone to the world beyond, become equal in destination by going to hell. Only their destination is determined, but their life span is not determined. For having done much evil action, they are cooked in hell for a long time; having done a small amount, for only a trifling period. But because the action of both of them is indeed inferior, therefore it was said - "Human beings of low action in the hereafter." "In the hereafter" - but this term has a connection with the term "after death" before it. The meaning is: after death, in the hereafter, having gone from here, those of low action become equal in the world beyond. At the conclusion of the teaching, many attained the fruition of stream-entry and so on.

The king sent off men, saying "Find out about Sundarī having been killed by others." Then those cheats, drinking liquor with those coins, quarrelled with each other. One said to another - "You, having killed Sundarī with a single blow and having placed her among the flower rubbish, drink liquor with the coins obtained from that - so be it, so be it." The king's men, having seized those cheats, showed them to the king. Then the king asked them "Was she killed by you?" "Yes, Sire." "By whom was she caused to be killed?" "By the followers of other sects, Sire." The king, having had the sectarians summoned, questioned them. They spoke in just the same way. "If so, go and wander about the city proclaiming thus - 'This Sundarī was caused to be killed by us who wished to bring disrepute upon the ascetic Gotama. There is no fault whatsoever of the ascetic Gotama, nor of his disciples; the fault is ours alone.'" They did so. The foolish multitude then believed, and both the sectarians and the cheats received the punishment of execution. Thenceforth the honour towards the Buddhas became great.

## 2. The Story of Those Oppressed by the Fruit of Misconduct

**307.** "Wearing the orange robe around their necks": the Teacher, while dwelling at the Bamboo Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to beings oppressed by the power of the results of misconduct.

For the Venerable Moggallāna, while descending from the Vulture's Peak together with the Elder Lakkhaṇa, having seen the individual existences of the skeleton-ghost and others, smiling, when asked by the Elder Lakkhaṇa the reason for the smile, having said "It is not the right time, friend, for this question; you should ask me in the presence of the Truth-finder," when asked by the Elder in the presence of the Truth-finder, having told of the fact of having seen the skeleton-ghost and others, "Here I, friend, descending from the Vulture's Peak mountain, saw a monk going through the sky. His double robe was blazing, in flames, aglow... etc. his body too was blazing" - by this method, together with the bowl, robe, waistband, and so on burning, he reported to the five legitimate ones. The Teacher, having told of the evil nature of those who, having gone forth in the Dispensation of Kassapa, the One of Ten Powers, were unable to act in accordance with the going forth, at that moment, showing the result of the misconduct of the many evil monks seated there, spoke this verse:

307. Many wearing the orange robe around their necks, of bad character,  
unrestrained;  
The evil ones, by their evil deeds, are reborn in hell."

Therein, "wearing the orange robe around their necks" means those whose necks are wrapped with the orange robe. "Of bad character" means of inferior character. "Unrestrained" means devoid of self-control of body and so on. Such evil persons, by unwholesome actions done by themselves, are reborn in hell. They, having been tormented there, having passed away from there, by the remainder of the result, even among ghosts they are thus tormented. This is the meaning.

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

*The story of those oppressed by the fruit of misconduct is second.*

## 3. The Story of the Monks Dwelling on the Bank of the Vaggumudā

**308.** "Better an iron ball": the Teacher, while dwelling in the Great Wood in dependence on Vesālī, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to the monks on the bank of the Vaggumudā. The story has come in the Pārājika concerning super-human achievements itself.

For then the Teacher, having said to those monks "But did you, monks, for the sake of your bellies, praise to the laypeople each other's super-human achievements?" when they said "Yes, venerable sir," having reproached those monks in many ways, spoke this verse -

308. Better an iron ball consumed, heated, like a flame of fire;

Than that an immoral one, unrestrained, should consume the country's almsfood."

Therein, "than that should consume" means: if an immoral one, a person without morality, unrestrained in body and so on, claiming "I am an ascetic," having taken and consumed the country's almsfood given in faith by the inhabitants of the country, better, more excellent, is an iron ball consumed, heated, blazing, of fire-colour. Why? For on account of that, only one individual existence would burn up, but the immoral one, having consumed offerings given in faith, would be cooked in hell for even many hundreds of births. This is the meaning.

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

*The story of the monks dwelling on the bank of the Vaggumudā is third.*

#### 4. The Story of the Millionaire Khemaka's Son

**309-310.** "Four states": the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to the nephew of Anāthapiṇḍika, a merchant's son named Khemaka.

He, it is said, was handsome; mostly women, having seen him, overcome by lust, were not able to remain in their own state. He too was fond of adultery indeed. Then the king's men, having seized him at night, showed him to the king. The king, thinking "I am ashamed before the great millionaire," without saying anything to him, had him released. But he indeed did not desist. Then for the second time and the third time too the king's men, having seized him, showed him to the king. The king just had him released. The great millionaire, having heard that news, having taken him, having gone to the Teacher's presence, having reported that news, said "Venerable sir, expound the Teaching to this one." The Teacher, having spoken to him a talk on religious emotion, showing the fault of resorting to another's wife, spoke these verses

309. "Four states a heedless man,  
Commits, one who frequents another's wife;  
Acquisition of demerit, uncomfortable sleeping,  
Blame as the third, hell as the fourth.
310. "There is gain of demerit and an evil destination,  
The pleasure of the frightened one with the frightened one is slight;  
And the king decrees a heavy punishment,  
Therefore a man should not resort to another's wife."

Therein, "states" means causes of suffering. "Heedless" means endowed with the release of mindfulness. "Commits" means reaches. "One who frequents another's wife" means one who resorts to another's wife, one who walks the wrong path. "Acquisition of demerit" means acquisition of the unwholesome. "Uncomfortable sleeping" means not obtaining sleeping as one wishes, one obtains sleeping for only a small, unwished-for period of time. "There is gain of demerit" means thus for him there is this gain of demerit, and by that demerit there is an evil destination reckoned

as hell. "And the pleasure is slight" means whatever pleasure he, being frightened, has together with the frightened woman, that too is slight, limited. "Heavy" means the king decrees a heavy punishment by way of cutting off the hand and so on. "Therefore" means because one resorting to another's wife reaches these things beginning with demerit, therefore one should not resort to another's wife - this is the meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, Khemaka became established in the fruition of stream-entry. Thenceforth the great multitude lived happily. But what was his former action? It is said that in the time of the Buddha Kassapa, having been a chief wrestler, having hoisted two golden banners on the golden shrine of the Ten-Powered One, he established the aspiration: "Setting aside the women who are relatives and blood-relations, may the rest, having seen me, be delighted." This was his former action. Therefore, having seen him in whatever place he was reborn, other women were not able to remain in their own state.

*The story of the millionaire Khemaka's son is the fourth.*

## 5. The Story of the Difficult-to-Admonish Monk

**311-313.** The Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to a certain monk who was difficult to admonish, beginning with "Just as kusa grass."

It is said that one monk, having unintentionally cut a single blade of grass, when remorse had arisen, having approached one monk, having reported the fact of it having been done by himself, asked "Friend, for one who cuts grass, what happens to him?" Then the other said to him "You perceive that something happens because of cutting grass; nothing happens here; but having confessed, one is released," and he himself too, having pulled out grass with both hands, seized it. The monks reported that incident to the Teacher. The Teacher, having rebuked that monk in many ways, expounding the Teaching, spoke these verses -

- 311. "Just as kusa grass wrongly grasped cuts the very hand;  
Asceticism wrongly handled drags one down to hell.
- 312. "Whatever lax action, and whatever defiled religious duty;  
A suspicious holy life - that is not of great fruit.
- 313. "If one would do it, one should do it; one should firmly exert in it;  
For lax renunciation scatters more dust."

Therein, "kusa grass" means any grass with a sharp edge, even at least a palm leaf. Just as that kusa grass, by whomever wrongly grasped, cuts into and splits his hand, just so asceticism, which is termed the ascetic duty, wrongly handled through broken morality and so on, drags one down to hell, causes one to be reborn in hell - this is the meaning. "Lax" means any action done by making a loose grip through performing with slackness. "Defiled" means defiled through conduct in improper resorts such as prostitutes and so on. "Suspicious" means to be remembered with suspicions; having seen the Community assembled even for a certain function among the Observance ceremony functions and so on, thinking "Certainly these, having

known my conduct, have assembled wishing to suspend me" - thus remembered with one's own suspicions, suspected and doubted. "That is not" means that holy life of such a kind, termed the ascetic duty, is not of great fruit for that person; precisely because it is not of great fruit for him, it is also not of great fruit for those who give him almsfood - this is the meaning. "If one would do" means therefore whatever action one would do, one should indeed do it. "One should firmly exert in it" means having made it firmly done, having become one with an irreversible undertaking, one should do it. "Renunciation" means the ascetic duty done with looseness, having reached the state of being broken and so on. "Scatters more dust" means such an ascetic duty is unable to remove the dust of lust and so on existing within; rather, it scatters yet more dust of lust and so on on top of that - this is the meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, many attained the fruition of stream-entry and so on. That monk too, standing firm in restraint, afterwards having developed insight, attained arahantship.

*The story of the difficult-to-admonish monk is the fifth.*

## 6. The Story of the Woman Overcome by Jealousy

**314.** "Not done": the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to a certain woman overcome by jealousy.

Her husband, it is said, had made intimacy with a certain female household slave. She, overcome by jealousy, having bound that slave woman by the hands and feet, having cut off her ears and nose, having thrown her into a secret inner room, having shut the door, in order to conceal the fact of that deed having been done by herself, saying "Come, sir, having gone to the monastery, let us listen to the Teaching," having taken her husband, having gone to the monastery, sat down listening to the Teaching. Then her visiting relatives, having come to the house, having opened the door, having seen that affliction, released the slave woman. She, having gone to the monastery, standing in the midst of the fourfold assembly, reported that matter to the One of Ten Powers. The Teacher, having heard her words, said "What is called misconduct should not be done even in a trifling degree, thinking 'Others do not know this of mine'; even when another does not know, only good conduct should be practised. For even misconduct done after concealing it brings remorse afterwards; good conduct generates only gladness" - and having said this, he spoke this verse -

314. "Wrong-doing not done is better; afterwards wrong-doing burns;  
And what is well done is better, which having done one does not regret."

Therein, "wrong-doing" means blameworthy action conducive to the realms of misery - not done is indeed better, excellent, supreme. "Afterwards burns" means for that, at each and every time of recollection, one is indeed burned. "Well done" means blameless, however, happiness-giving action conducive to a fortunate destination - done is better. "Which having done" means whatever action having done, afterwards at the time of recollection one is not burned, does not regret, but becomes filled with pleasure - that action is excellent; this is the meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, the lay follower and that woman became established in the fruition of stream-entry. And moreover, they made that slave woman a freewoman right there and made her one who practises the Teaching.

*The story of the woman overcome by jealousy is the sixth.*

## 7. The Story of Several Monks

**315.** "Just as a city": the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to several visiting monks.

They, it is said, having entered the rains retreat in a certain borderland, dwelt comfortably in the first month. In the middle month, thieves, having come, having raided their village as food resort, having seized plunder, departed. From then on, the people, constructing that borderland city for the purpose of warding off the thieves, did not obtain the opportunity to attend carefully to those monks. They, having dwelt for the rains retreat uncomfortably, having finished keeping the rains retreat, having gone to Sāvattthī for the purpose of seeing the Teacher, having paid homage to the Teacher, sat down to one side. The Teacher, having exchanged friendly welcome with them, having asked "Did you dwell comfortably, monks?" "Venerable sir, we dwelt comfortably only in the first month; in the middle month thieves raided the village; from then on the people, constructing the city, did not obtain the opportunity to attend carefully. Therefore we dwelt for the rains retreat uncomfortably" - when this was said, "Enough, monks, do not worry; dwelling in comfort is indeed always hard to obtain. A monk should guard his very own individual existence, just as those people guarded the city" - having said this, he spoke this verse -

315. "Just as a borderland city, guarded within and without;  
So guard yourselves, let not the moment pass you by;  
For those who have missed the moment grieve, consigned to hell."

Therein, "within and without" means, monks, just as by those people making the doors, walls, and so on of that borderland city firm - this being "with the inner" - and making the watchtowers, moats, and so on firm - this being "with the outer" - it was made well guarded within and without; so you too, having established mindfulness, having closed the six internal doors, not releasing the door-guarding mindfulness, just as the six external sense bases when being grasped lead to the destruction of the internal ones, so by non-grasping, having made those too firm, not abandoning the door-guarding mindfulness for the purpose of their non-entry, wandering about, guard yourselves - this is the meaning. "Let not the moment pass you by" means whoever does not guard himself thus, this moment - the moment of a Buddha's arising, the moment of birth in the Middle Country, the moment of attaining right view, the moment of non-deficiency of the six sense bases - all this moment passes by that person. Let not that moment pass you by. "Those who have missed the moment" means those who have passed beyond that moment, and that moment has passed beyond those persons, they, having been consigned to hell, having been reborn there, grieve - this is the meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, those monks, in whom religious urgency had arisen, became established in arahantship.

## 8. The Story of the Jains

**316-317.** "Of what should not be ashamed of": the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to the Jains.

For on one day, monks, having seen the Jains, raised up a discussion: "Friends, these Jains are more excellent than the naked ascetics who are altogether uncovered, in that they conceal at least one front side; these are possessed of shame, methinks." Having heard that, the Jains, having said "We do not conceal for that reason; but dust particles and so on are indeed persons, bound to the life faculty; so that they may not fall into our alms vessels - for this reason we conceal," spoke much talk with them by way of argument and counter-argument. The monks, having approached the Teacher, at the time of sitting down, reported that occurrence. The Teacher, having said "Monks, those who are ashamed of what should not be ashamed of and are not ashamed of what should be ashamed of are indeed heading for an unfortunate realm," expounding the Teaching, spoke these verses -

316. "They are ashamed of what should not be ashamed of, they are not ashamed of what should be ashamed of;  
Having undertaken wrong view, beings go to an unfortunate realm.
317. "Seeing danger in the fearless, and seeing fearlessness in danger;  
Having undertaken wrong view, beings go to an unfortunate realm."

Therein, "of what should not be ashamed of" means by what should not be ashamed of. For the alms vessel is indeed what should not be ashamed of; but they, going about having concealed it, are ashamed of that. "Of what should be ashamed of" means by the uncovered private parts, which should be ashamed of. But they, going about without concealing that, are not ashamed of what should be ashamed of. Therefore, their being ashamed of what should not be ashamed of and not being ashamed of what should be ashamed of is wrong view, by way of grasping what is hollow and by way of grasping otherwise. But those, going about having undertaken that, are beings who have undertaken wrong view and go to an unfortunate realm classified as hell and so on - this is the meaning. "In the fearless" means the alms vessel is called fearless because, in dependence on the alms vessel, the fears of lust, hate, delusion, conceit, wrong view, mental defilement, and misconduct do not arise; but those who conceal it out of fear are called those who see danger in the fearless. But in dependence on the private parts, because lust and so on arise, that is called danger; by not concealing that, they see fearlessness in danger. Because of having undertaken that false grasping, beings who have undertaken wrong view go to an unfortunate realm - this is the meaning.

At the conclusion of the teaching, many Jains, with stirred minds, went forth, and the proclamation of the Teaching was beneficial for those who had assembled.

## 9. The Story of the Followers of Heretical Teachers

**318-319.** "Faultless" - the Teacher, while dwelling at Jeta's Grove, spoke this proclamation of the Teaching referring to the disciples of other sects.

For on one occasion, disciples of other sects, having seen their own sons playing together with their retinues with the sons of lay followers holding right view, when they came home, made them take an oath: "The ascetics, disciples of the Sakyan, are not to be paid homage to by you, nor should you enter their monastery." They, one day, while playing near the outer gateway of the Jeta's Grove monastery, became thirsty. Then they sent one lay follower's boy, saying "You, having gone in there, having drunk water, bring some for us too." He, having entered the monastery, having paid homage to the Teacher, having drunk water, reported that matter. Then the Teacher said to him "You yourself, having drunk water, go and send the others too right here for the purpose of drinking water." He did so. They, having come, drank water. The Teacher, having had them summoned, having spoken a talk on the Teaching suitable for them, having made them of unshakeable faith, established them in the refuges and in the precepts. They, having gone to their own homes, reported that matter to their mother and father. Then their parents, having reached displeasure, lamented: "Our children have become ones with wrong views." Then several clever neighbouring people of theirs, having come, spoke the Teaching for the purpose of appeasing their displeasure. They, having heard their talk, saying "We shall hand over these boys to the ascetic Gotama himself," led them to the monastery together with a great group of relatives. The Teacher, having observed their disposition, expounding the Teaching, spoke these verses -

318. "Those who perceive fault in the faultless, and see the faulty as faultless;  
Having undertaken wrong view, beings go to an unfortunate realm.

319. "Having known fault as fault, and the faultless as faultless;  
Having undertaken right view, beings go to a good destination."

Therein, "faultless" means right view of ten bases, and the phenomena that are the decisive support for it. "Those who perceive fault" means those in whom the idea has arisen "This is a fault." But those who see as faultless the wrong view of ten bases and the phenomena that are the decisive support for it - having known the faultless of this as faulty and the faulty as faultless, because of having undertaken wrong view reckoned as grasping, beings who have undertaken wrong view go to an unfortunate realm - this is the meaning. The meaning of the second verse should be understood by the reverse of what has been stated.

At the conclusion of the teaching, all of them too, having established themselves in the three refuges, listening to the Teaching again and again, became established in the fruition of stream-entry.

*The story of the followers of heretical teachers is the ninth.*

*The commentary on the Hell Chapter is concluded.*

*The twenty-second 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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