

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 -
Aṭṭhakathā)

12. Commentary on the Chronicle of the Buddhas
(12. Buddhavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā)

23. Commentary on the Chronicle of the Buddha Vessabhū
(23. Vessabhūbuddhavaṃsavaṇṇanā)



PaliVerse

5. The Collection of Minor Texts

12. Commentary on the Chronicle of the Buddhas

23. Explanation of the Chronicle of the Buddha Vessabhū

Now, in the later period of the Perfectly Enlightened One Sikhī, when his Dispensation had disappeared, human beings with a lifespan of seventy thousand years, having gradually declined, had a lifespan of ten years. Having increased again, having become those of unlimited lifespan, having gradually declined, they had a lifespan of sixty thousand years. Then a Teacher named Vessabhū - the conqueror of mind, the overlord of all the world, the self-become one - arose in the world. He, having fulfilled the perfections, having been reborn in the Tusita city, having passed away from there, took conception in the womb of a queen named Yasavatī, the chief queen of a king named Suppatīta in the city of Anoma, who was the virtuous Sīlavatī. He, after the elapse of ten months, came forth from the mother's womb in the Anupama Park. Even as he was being born, pleasing the people, he roared a bull's roar. Therefore, because of the bull's roar, on his name-giving day they gave him the name "Vessabhū." He dwelt in the house for six thousand years. He had three mansions named Ruci, Suruci, and Rativaḍḍhana. Thirty thousand women headed by Queen Sucittā were in attendance.

He, having seen the four signs, when a son named Suppabuddha was born to a queen named Sucittā, having gone in a golden palanquin for the purpose of seeing the park, having taken the ochre robes given by the gods, went forth. Thirty-seven thousand went forth following him. Then he, surrounded by them, having practised the practice of striving for six months, on the full moon day of Vesākha, having eaten the milk-rice given by one named Sirivaḍḍhanā, whose body was visible, in the market town of Sucitta, having spent the day residence in a sal grove, in the evening time, having taken eight handfuls of grass given by the king of the city of Narinda, he approached the Sāla Bodhi tree from the right. That sal tree too was the same measure as a trumpet-flower tree. The splendour of its flowers and fruits should be understood in the same way. He, having approached the foot of the sal tree, having spread a grass mat forty cubits wide, having folded his legs crosswise, having obtained the unobstructed knowledge, free from mental hindrances, free from the obstruction of all sensual intoxication - "Through the round of many births, etc. it has reached the elimination of cravings" - having uttered an inspired utterance, having spent seven weeks right there, having seen the achievement of decisive support of his own younger brother Prince Soṇa and Prince Uttara, having gone by the celestial path, having descended into the Aruṇa Park near the city of Anoma, having had the princes summoned by the park keeper, in the midst of them together with their retinues, he set in motion the wheel of the Teaching. Then there was the first full realisation of eighty thousand koṭis.

Again, while the Blessed One was wandering on a journey through the country, expounding the Teaching here and there, there was the full realisation of the teaching for seventy thousand koṭis; that was the second full realisation. In the very city of Anoma, breaking the net of wrong view, bringing down the banner of conceit of the sectarians, destroying the vanity of conceit, raising the banner of the Teaching, having performed the Twin Miracle before a human assembly extending ninety yojanas and an assembly of gods beyond measure, having gladdened gods and humans, he satiated sixty koṭis with the nectar of the Teaching; that was the third full realisation. Therefore it was said -

1. In that very Maṇḍa cosmic cycle, matchless, without equal;
The Leader named Vessabhū by name arose in the world.
2. "Indeed, blazing with the fire of lust, the realm of cravings was then
conquered;
Like an elephant having cut the bond, he attained the highest enlightenment.
3. "When Vessabhū, the leader of the world, was setting in motion the wheel of
the Teaching;
There was the first full realisation for eighty thousand koṭis.
4. "When the elder of the world, the lord of men, had set out on a journey in the
realm;
For seventy thousand crores, there was the second full realisation.
5. "Dispelling the great wrong view, he performs a miracle;
Men and deities assembled, in the ten-thousand world-system with its gods.
6. "Having seen a great marvel, wonderful, hair-raising;
Sixty koṭis of gods and humans awakened."

1-6. Therein, "blazing" means this entire threefold world is fully ablaze. "The fire of lust" means by lust. "The realm of cravings was conquered" means having known thus: "The realm conquered by cravings is the domain of their control" - this is the meaning. "Like an elephant having cut the bond" means like an elephant having broken the bond of the rotting creeper, he reached, attained the highest enlightenment. "The ten-thousand world-system" means in the ten-thousandfold world system. "With its gods" means in the world with its gods. "They awakened" means they understood fully.

Now, at the meeting of the two chief disciples Soṇa and Uttara, in the midst of eighty thousand Worthy Ones who had gone forth, on the full moon day of Māgha, he recited the Pātimokkha. That was the first assembly. But when monks numbering thirty-seven thousand who had gone forth together with Vessabhū, the overlord of all the world, had departed from the group at a time of decline, they, having heard the setting in motion of the Wheel of the Teaching of the Perfectly Enlightened One Vessabhū, having come to a city named Soreyya, saw the Blessed One. The Blessed One, having expounded the Teaching to them, having given the going forth to all of them by the "Come, monk" ordination, recited the Pātimokkha to an assembly possessed of four factors. That was the second assembly.

But when a prince named Upasanta exercised kingship in the city of Nārivāhana, out of compassion for him the Blessed One went there, and he too, having heard of the Blessed One's arrival, together with his retinue, having gone out to meet the Blessed One, having invited him, having given a great gift, having heard his Teaching, with a gladdened heart, went forth. Sixty thousand men went forth following him. They, together with him, attained arahantship. The Blessed One Vessabhū, surrounded by them, recited the Pātimokkha. That was the third assembly. Therefore it was said -

7. "There were three assemblies of Vessabhū, the great sage;
Of those who had eliminated the mental corruptions, spotless ones, of peaceful minds, such ones.
8. "The first meeting was of eighty thousand monks;
The second meeting was of seventy thousand monks.
9. "The third meeting was of sixty thousand monks;
Of those who had gone beyond the fear of ageing and so on, legitimate sons of the great sage."

7-9. At that time our Bodhisatta, having been a king named Sudassana, supremely dear to behold, in the city of Sarabhavatī, when Vessabhū, the leader of the world, had come to the city of Sarabha, having heard his Teaching, with a gladdened heart, having placed on his head a salutation with joined palms resplendent with the joining of ten fingernails, resembling an unblemished, perfect lotus bud born from water, having given a great giving together with robes to the Community headed by the Buddha, having made right there a perfumed chamber for the purpose of the Blessed One's dwelling, having surrounded it, having had a thousand monasteries built, and having relinquished all his wealth in the Blessed One's Dispensation, having gone forth in his presence, accomplished in the quality of good conduct, delighting in the thirteen virtues of ascetic practice, devoted to the quest for the requisites of enlightenment, fond of the Buddha's Dispensation, he lived. That Blessed One too declared concerning him - "In the future, thirty-one cosmic cycles from now, this one will become a Buddha named Gotama." Therefore it was said -

10. "I at that time, a warrior named Sudassana;
Having invited the great hero, having given a very precious gift;
With food and drink and cloth, I venerated the Conqueror together with the Community.
11. Of that matchless Buddha, the supreme wheel was set in motion;
Having heard the sublime Teaching, I delighted in the going forth.
12. Having carried on the great giving, unwearied day and night;
Knowing the going forth to be accomplished in virtues, I went forth in the presence of the Conqueror.
13. Accomplished in the qualities of good conduct, concentrated in duty and morality;
Seeking omniscience, I delight in the Conqueror's Dispensation.

14. Having approached with faith and joy, I pay homage to the Buddha, the Teacher;
Joy arises in me, because of enlightenment itself.
15. Having known his unwavering mind, the Perfectly Enlightened One said this:
Thirty-one cosmic cycles from now, this one will be a Buddha.
16. "Having gone forth from the delightful city called Kapila, etc. we shall be face to face with him.
17. "Having heard his word, I gladdened my mind even more;
I determined upon further ascetic practice, for the fulfilment of the ten perfections."

10-17. Therein, "the wheel was turned" means the wheel of the Teaching was set in motion. "The superior teaching" means the super-human achievement. "The going forth accomplished in virtues" means the meaning is having known, he went forth. "Concentrated in duties and morality" means concentrated in duties and in morality. The meaning is concentrated in the fulfilment of each of those. "I delight" means I delighted. "With faith and joy" means having approached faith and joy. "I pay homage" means I bowed down; it should be understood as a present tense expression used in a past sense. "Sattharan" is the Teacher. "With unwavering mind" means with a mind that does not draw back.

Now that Blessed One's city was named Anoma. His father was a warrior named Suppatīta, his mother was named Yasavatī, Soṇa and Uttara were the two chief disciples, Upasanta by name was the attendant, Rāmā and Samālā were the two chief female disciples, the sāla tree was the enlightenment tree, and his body was sixty cubits in height. The life span was sixty thousand years, his wife was named Sucittā, his son was named Suppabuddha, and he departed in a golden palanquin. Therefore it was said -

18. The city was named Anoma, the warrior was named Suppatīta;
The mother was named Yasavatī, of Vessabhū, the great sage.
23. Soṇa and Uttara were the chief disciples;
Upasanta by name was the attendant of Vessabhū, the great sage.
24. Rāmā and Samālā were the chief female disciples;
The enlightenment tree of that Blessed One is called the great sal tree.
25. Sothika and Ramma were the chief male attendants;
Gotamī and Sirimā were the chief female attendants.
26. Sixty cubits in height, like a golden sacrificial post;
Rays emanate from his body, like fire on a mountain at night.
27. "Sixty thousand years was the life span of that great sage;
Remaining for that long, he helped many people to cross.
28. Having made the Teaching widespread, having classified the great multitude;

Having established the boat of the Dhamma, he, together with his disciples, attained final Nibbāna.

29. Beautiful to behold was all the people, the dwelling, the deportment;
All that has disappeared, are not all activities empty?"

18-29. Therein, "like a golden sacrificial post" means similar to a golden pillar - this is the meaning. "Emanates" means transmigrates here and there. "Rays" means rays of radiance. "Like fire on a mountain at night" means like a fire on the summit of a mountain at night. The meaning is "his body illuminated by rays." "Having classified" means having made a division, by way of the keen-witted and so on, and by way of stream-enterers and so on - this is the meaning. "The boat of the Teaching" means the boat of the Teaching reckoned as the eightfold path, having established it for the purpose of crossing over the four floods - this is the meaning. "Fair to behold" means beautiful to see. "All people" means all people, the Perfectly Enlightened One together with the Community of disciples - this is the meaning. "Dwelling" means a dwelling-place; everywhere the accusative expression should be understood as used in the reflexive sense.

The Blessed One Vessabhū, it is said, attained final Nibbāna in the Khema Deer Park in the city of Usabhavatī. But his relics were scattered.

"In the city of Usabhavatī, the best of cities, the Blessed One Vessabhū, the bull among conquerors;

In the delightful park-monastery, he attained the state without residue of clinging, it is said."

The remainder is obvious everywhere in the verses.

The explanation of the Chronicle of the Buddha Vessabhū is completed.

The twenty-first lineage of the Buddhas 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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