

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā)

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

1. The Collection of the Long Discourses - Commentaries
(1. Dīgha Nikāya - Aṭṭhakathā)

1. Commentary on the Chapter on the Aggregate of Morality
(1. Sīlakkhandhavaggaṭṭhakathā)

6. Commentary on the Discourse to Mahāli
(6. Mahālisuttavaṇṇanā)



PaliVerse

1.The Collection of the Long Discourses - Commentaries

1. Commentary on the Chapter on the Aggregate of Morality

6. Explanation of the Discourse to Mahāli

Explanation of the Story of the Brahmin Messengers

359. Thus have I heard - "On one occasion the Blessed One was at Vesālī" is the Mahāli Discourse. Herein this is the explanation of terms not previously explained. "At Vesālī" means in the city that received the name Vesālī because of repeatedly attaining the state of expansion. "In the Great Wood" means outside the city there is a naturally grown forest standing connected as one with the Himalayas, which is called the Great Wood precisely because of its greatness; in that Great Wood. "In the Pinnacled Hall" means in that jungle thicket they established a monastery for the Community. There, having fitted a roof-peak on top of the pillars, in the manner of a pinnacled hall, they built a mansion resembling a heavenly palace of the gods; with reference to that, the entire monastery of the Community became known as "the Pinnacled Hall." The Blessed One dwells in that monastery in dependence on that Vesālī. Therefore it was said - "He dwells at Vesālī in the Great Wood in the Pinnacled Hall." "From Kosala" means inhabitants of the Kosalan country. "From Magadha" means inhabitants of the Magadhan country. "On business" means with work that must inevitably be done. For that which is proper even not to do is called a task; that which must inevitably be done is called business.

360. "The Blessed One is in seclusion" means having gone aside from the roaming among various objects, secluded, hidden, having approached solitude, he experiences the delight of meditative absorption with a single object - this is the meaning. "Right there" means in that very monastery. "To one side" means having departed from that place, they sat down in the shade of various trees.

Explanation of the Story of the Licchavī Oṭṭhaddha

361. "Oṭṭhaddha" means one who received this name on account of having a stiff lip. "Together with a great assembly of Licchavis" means having given a gift before the meal to the Community of monks headed by the Buddha, having determined the Observance factors in the presence of the Blessed One, having had perfumes, garlands and so on taken up, having assembled a great royal assembly of Licchavis by proclamation, together with that great assembly of Licchavis adorned with garments, ornaments and cosmetics of blue, yellow and other colours, comparable to the assembly of the Tāvatiṃsa heaven, he approached. "It is not the right time, Mahāli" - the root name of that Oṭṭhaddha was "Mahāli"; by that root name alone the Elder addresses him as "Mahāli." "Sat down to one side" means he sat down in suitable shade of trees together with that assembly of Licchavis, speaking the praise of the Triple Gem.

362. "Sīha the novice" means the nephew of the Venerable Nāgita, a novice named "Sīha" who had gone forth at the age of seven and was devoted and engaged in the Dispensation. It is said that he, having seen that great assembly - "This assembly is great, having filled the entire monastery, they are seated; surely the Blessed One will today expound the Teaching to this assembly with great endeavour. What if I, having informed my preceptor, were to have the fact of the great assembly having gathered reported to the Blessed One?" - having thought thus, he approached the Venerable Nāgita. "Venerable Kassapa" - he addresses the elder by his clan name. "This crowd" means this multitude of people.

"You yourself inform the Blessed One" - Sīha, it is said, was intimate with the Blessed One. For this elder was of stout body; on account of the heaviness of his body, the state of laziness in getting up, sitting down, and so on appeared as if slightly not abandoned. Now this novice performs duties for the Blessed One from time to time. Therefore the elder, having said to him "You too are intimate with the One of Ten Powers," said "Go, you yourself inform him." "In the shade of the dwelling" means in the shadow of the dwelling; the meaning is the space pervaded by the shade of the great pinnacled building. It is said that that Pinnacled Hall was long from south to north and facing east; therefore in front of it a great shade was spread out. Sīha prepared a seat there for the Blessed One.

363. Then the Blessed One, having come out through the doorways and through the windows, his departure heralded by the six-coloured Buddha-rays running about and spreading forth, like a full moon from amidst the clouds, having come out from the pinnacled hall, sat down on the excellent Buddha-seat that had been prepared. Therefore it was said - "Then the Blessed One, having come out from the dwelling, sat down on the prepared seat in the shade of the dwelling."

364-365. "Some days ago, venerable sir, earlier than that": here, yesterday is called "former," beyond that is "earlier than that." From that point onwards, however, all are both former and earlier than that. "Since" (yadagge) means beginning from the original day, having made whatever day the starting point as the far end, "I dwell" is the meaning; it is said to mean "as long as I have dwelt." Now, showing the measure of that, he said "not long, three years." Or alternatively, "since" (yadagge) means having made whatever day the starting point, "I dwell not long, three years" is also the meaning. It is said to mean "having made whatever day the beginning, I dwelt not long, only three years." It is said that this one, carrying the Blessed One's bowl and robes, attended upon the Blessed One for three years; with reference to that, he speaks thus. "Dear" (piyarūpāni) means of a dear nature, of a pleasant nature. "Connected with sensual pleasure" (kāṃūpasamhitāni) means connected with the gratification of sensual pleasure. "Enticing" (rajanīyāni) means productive of lust. "But I do not hear divine sounds": why does Sunakkhatta not hear them? It is said that he, having approached the Blessed One, requested the preliminary work for the divine eye. The Blessed One explained it to him. He, having practised in accordance with the advice, having developed the divine eye, having seen the forms of the deities, thought: "In this bodily form there must be a sweet sound; how indeed might I hear it?" Having approached the Blessed One, he asked about the preliminary work for the divine ear. And this one, in the past, having struck a virtuous monk on the orifice of the ear, made him deaf. Therefore, even while doing the preliminary work, he was

unable to achieve the divine ear. For that reason the Blessed One did not explain the preliminary work to him. He, to that extent, having bound resentment towards the Blessed One, thought - "Certainly the ascetic Gotama thinks thus - 'I too am of the warrior caste, this one too is of the warrior caste; if his knowledge were to grow, this one too would become omniscient' - out of jealousy he did not explain it to me." He, in due course, having reached the state of a householder, relating that matter to Mahāli the Licchavi, spoke thus.

366-371. "Developed one-sidedly" means developed for one side, for one portion - that is, developed for the purpose of seeing divine forms or for the purpose of hearing divine sounds. This is the meaning. "Across" means in the intermediate direction. "Developed both-sidedly" means developed for both sides, for both portions. This is the meaning. "This, Mahāli, is the cause" means this concentration developed one-sidedly for the seeing of divine forms only is the cause. Having heard this matter, that Licchavi thought - "This hearing of sounds with the divine ear is, methinks, the highest purpose in this Dispensation. Surely it is for this purpose that these monks live the holy life unmistakably for fifty or even sixty years. What if I were to ask the One of Ten Powers about this matter?"

372. Then, asking about that matter, he said beginning with "Surely, venerable sir, of these." Regarding "developments of concentration": here, concentration itself is the development of concentration; the meaning is "of the concentrations developed on both sides." Now, because these developments of concentration are external to the Dispensation, not internal. Therefore, having rejected those, showing that for the sake of which monks live the holy life, the Blessed One said beginning with "No indeed, Mahāli."

Explanation of the Four Noble Fruitions

373. "Of the three mental fetters" means of the three bonds beginning with identity view. For these bind beings to the chariot made of the suffering of the round of rebirths; therefore they are called "mental fetters." "Becomes a stream-enterer" means one who has entered the stream of the path. "No longer subject to fall into lower realms" means having the nature of not falling into the four realms of misery. "Fixed in destiny" means fixed by the cosmic law of phenomena. "Headed for the highest enlightenment" means the highest enlightenment reckoned as the upper three paths is the further destination for him, or it is to be attained by means of this - thus he is one headed for the highest enlightenment.

"Reduction" means due to the reduced state of the weakness of prepossession and the occasional and rare arising. "Lower" means belonging to the lower part; for one bound by which is not able to be reborn above in the plane of the pure abodes. "Of spontaneous birth" - this is an expression rejecting the remaining modes of generation. "Attaining final nibbāna there" means having the nature of attaining final nibbāna in that upper existence itself. "Not subject to return" means having the nature of not returning again from that Brahmā world by way of conception. "Liberation of mind" means purification of mind; this is a designation for the consciousness of the fruition of arahantship of one liberated from the bondage of all mental defilements. "Liberation by wisdom" - here too it should be understood that the wisdom of the fruition of arahantship itself, liberated from the bondage of all

mental defilements, is the liberation by wisdom. "In this very life" means in this very individual existence. "Himself" means by oneself. "By direct knowledge" means having directly known. "Having realised" means having made evident. Or alternatively, "having realised by direct knowledge" also has the meaning of having realised through direct knowledge, through most excellent knowledge. "Having attained" means having reached, having obtained. Having heard this, the Licchavi king thought - "But this teaching cannot be penetrated by flying up like a bird, nor by going on one's chest like a lizard; surely one who penetrates this must have the preliminary practice. Let me ask about it."

Explanation of the Noble Eightfold Path

374-375. Then, asking the Blessed One, he said beginning with "But, venerable sir, is there." "Eightfold" means just as a five-part musical instrument or an eight-part village, having merely eight factors, it is eightfold; there is no path apart from the factors. Therefore he said - "As follows: right view, etc. right concentration." Therein, right view has the characteristic of right seeing. Right thought has the characteristic of right application. Right speech has the characteristic of right encompassing. Right action has the characteristic of right originating. Right livelihood has the characteristic of right purification. Right effort has the characteristic of right exertion. Right mindfulness has the characteristic of right establishing. Right concentration has the characteristic of right composing. Among these, each one has three functions. As follows: right view, to begin with, abandons wrong view together with other defilements opposed to itself, makes cessation its object, and sees the associated mental states through non-delusion by means of dispelling the delusion that conceals them. Right thought and the rest likewise abandon wrong thought and so on, and make cessation their object; but here, in particular, right thought applies the co-arisen mental states. Right speech rightly encompasses. Right action rightly originates. Right livelihood rightly purifies. Right effort rightly exerts. Right mindfulness rightly establishes. Right concentration rightly strives.

Furthermore, this right view, in the preliminary stage, occurs at different moments and with different objects, but at the moment of the path, at one moment and with one object. But by function, it obtains four names beginning with "knowledge of suffering." Right thought and the rest too, in the preliminary stage, occur at different moments and with different objects. At the moment of the path, at one moment and with one object. Among them, right thought, by function, obtains three names beginning with "thought of renunciation." Right speech and the rest are three abstinences and also volitions, but at the moment of the path, they are only abstinences. Right effort and right mindfulness - this pair too, by function, obtains four names by way of right strivings and establishments of mindfulness. But right concentration, both in the preliminary stage and at the moment of the path, is just right concentration itself.

Thus, among these eight factors, right view was taught first by the Blessed One because of its great service to the meditator who has set out for the achievement of Nibbāna. For this has been called "the lamp of wisdom" and "the weapon of wisdom." Therefore, by means of this right view, reckoned as insight knowledge in the preliminary stage, having scattered the darkness of ignorance and slaying the thieves of mental defilements, one who practises meditation attains Nibbāna in security.

Therefore it was said - "Right view was taught first because of its great service to the meditator who has set out for the achievement of Nibbāna."

But right thought is of great service to it, therefore it was stated immediately after that. Just as indeed a money-changer, having turned over and turned over with his hand, looking at a coin with his eye - knows "this one is genuine, this one is counterfeit." In the same way, one who practises meditation too, in the preliminary stage, having reflected with applied thought, looking with insight wisdom - understands "these phenomena are of the sensual-sphere, these phenomena are of the fine-material-sphere and so on." Or just as a carpenter, having taken an adze, planes a great tree that has been turned over and turned over and given by a man holding it at the end, and brings it to the work, in the same way, one who practises meditation, with wisdom, regarding phenomena that have been reflected upon and reflected upon with applied thought and given - having defined by the method "these are of the sensual-sphere, these are of the fine-material-sphere" and so on, brings them to the work. Therefore it was said - "Right thought is of great service to it, therefore it was stated immediately after that." And this is helpful to right speech just as it is to right view. As he said - "First indeed, Visākha, having applied thought and having sustained thought, afterwards one breaks into speech." Therefore right speech was stated immediately after that.

But because - having first arranged by speech "we shall do this and that," people in the world engage in activities; therefore, speech being supportive of bodily action, right action was stated immediately after right speech. But having abandoned the fourfold verbal misconduct and the threefold bodily misconduct, it is only for one who is fulfilling both kinds of good conduct that the morality with livelihood as the eighth is fulfilled, not for the other; therefore right livelihood was stated immediately after those two. But for one of purified livelihood, it is not proper to dwell asleep and heedless, having become satisfied to that extent thinking "my livelihood is pure." Rather, in order to show that "this energy should be aroused in all postures," right effort was stated immediately after that. Then, for the purpose of showing that "even by one of aroused energy, mindfulness should be made well established in the four objects beginning with the body," right mindfulness was taught immediately after that. But because mindfulness thus well established, having examined the courses of mental states that are helpful and unhelpful to concentration, is able to concentrate the mind on a single object, therefore it should be understood that right concentration was taught immediately after right mindfulness. "For the realisation of these things" means for the purpose of directly experiencing these, namely the fruition of stream-entry and so on.

Explanation of the Story of the Two Gone Forth

376-377. "Ekamidāhan" - why was this begun? It is said that this king - was one holding the view that "matter is the self," therefore his mind did not resolve upon the Teaching. Then by the Blessed One, in order to bring forth one reason for the purpose of making clear his view, this was begun. Therein this is the meaning in brief - "On one occasion I was dwelling in Ghosita's park; while I was living there, those two gone forth ones asked me thus. Then I, having shown them the arising of a Buddha, speaking what is called the teaching of the thread, said this - 'Friends, would it be proper for a son of good family accomplished in faith, having gone forth in the

Dispensation of such a Teacher, having thus fulfilled the threefold morality and having attained the first meditative absorption and so on, standing thus, to say "the soul is the same as the body" and so on?' Then, when they said 'proper,' having rejected that theory by saying 'But I, friends, thus know and thus see, and yet I do not say so,' and having further shown one who has eliminated the mental corruptions, I said 'It is not proper for this one to say thus.' They, having heard my words, were delighted." When this was said, he too was delighted. Therefore he said - "This the Blessed One said. Delighted, Oṭṭhaddha the Licchavi rejoiced in what the Blessed One had said."

Thus in the Sumaṅgalavilāsinī, the Commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya,

the explanation of the Discourse to Mahāli is completed.



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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