

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)
2. Commentary on the Great Chapter (2. Mahāvaggaṭṭhakathā)
7. Commentary on the Discourse on the Great Congregation
(7. Mahāsamayasuttavaṇṇanā)

[DN 20, PTS 2.253-2.262]



PaliVerse

1.The Collection of the Long Discourses - Commentaries

2. Commentary on the Great Chapter

7. Explanation of the Discourse on the Great Congregation

Commentary on the Introduction

331. "Thus have I heard" - this is the Discourse on the Great Assembly. Herein this is the explanation of terms not previously explained - "Among the Sakyans" means: according to the method of origin stated in the Ambaṭṭha Sutta, dependent on the inspired utterance "Capable indeed, good sirs, are the princes," the abode of the royal princes who obtained the name "Sakkā" - though a single province, is called "Sakkā" by conventional usage; in that Sakyan province. "In the Great Wood" means in a great forest that was naturally grown and planted, connected as one with the Himalayas. "All of them Worthy Ones" means by those who had attained arahantship on the very day this discourse was spoken.

Herein this is the progressive discourse - It is said that the Sākiyans and Koliyans, having had a single dam constructed across a river named Rohiṇī between the city of Kapilavatthu and the city of Koliya, cultivate their crops. Then, in the month of Jeṭṭhamūla, when the crops were withering, the labourers of the residents of both cities gathered together. There the residents of the city of Koliya said - "If this water is drawn off to both sides, it will not suffice for you nor for us. But our crop will be produced with just one watering. Give this water to us." The residents of the city of Kapilavatthu said - "When you have filled your granaries and are standing by, we, having taken red gold, sapphires, and dark coins, with baskets and bags and so on in hand, will not be able to go about at your house doors. Our crop too will be produced with just one watering. Give this water to us." "We will not give it." "We too will not give it." Thus having escalated the dispute, one stood up and gave a blow to another, and he too to yet another - thus having struck one another and having insulted the birth of the royal families, they escalated the dispute.

The Koliyan labourers say - "You roar having taken the Kapilavatthu-dwellers with you, who like dogs and jackals and so on lived together with their own sisters. What will their elephants and horses and shield-weapons do to us?" The Sākiyan labourers too say - "You now roar having taken leprous children with you, who, helpless, without refuge, like animals, dwelt in jujube trees. What will their elephants and horses and shield-weapons do to us?" They went and told the ministers appointed to that work; the ministers told the royal families. Thereupon the Sākiyans - "We shall show our strength and power to those who lived together with their sisters" - went forth prepared for battle. The Koliyans too - "We shall show our strength and power to those who dwelt in jujube trees" - went forth prepared for battle.

The Blessed One too, at the very time towards the break of dawn, having emerged from the attainment of great compassion, surveying the world, saw these going forth thus prepared for battle. Having seen - reflecting "If I go, will this dispute be appeased or not?" - "Having gone there, I shall relate three birth stories for the purpose of appeasing the dispute; thereupon the dispute will be appeased. Then, having related two birth stories for the purpose of illustrating unity, I shall teach the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. Having heard the teaching, the residents of both cities will give two hundred and fifty princes each; I shall ordain them; then there will be a great assembly" - he made this determination. Therefore, while these were going forth prepared for battle, without informing anyone, by himself taking his bowl and robes, having gone and folded his legs crosswise in the sky between the two armies, having emitted the six-coloured rays, he sat down.

The dwellers of Kapilavatthu, upon seeing the Blessed One - having thought "The foremost of our kinsmen, the Teacher, has come; surely our state of being in dispute has been seen by him" - "But it is not possible for us to bring a weapon down upon another's body when the Blessed One has come; let the dwellers of Koliya city strike us or roast us" - having thrown down their weapons, having paid homage to the Blessed One, they sat down. The dwellers of Koliya city too, having thought likewise, having thrown down their weapons, having paid homage to the Blessed One, sat down.

The Blessed One, although knowing - asked "Why have you come, great kings?" Blessed One, not for sport at a ford, not for sport at a mountain, not for sport at a river, not for the purpose of seeing the hills, but having prepared for battle at this place, we have come. In dependence on what is your dispute, great kings? Water, venerable sir. What is water worth, great kings? Of little value, venerable sir. What is earth worth, great kings? Priceless, venerable sir. What are warriors worth, great kings? Warriors are priceless, venerable sir. In dependence on water of little value, for what purpose would you destroy priceless warriors, great kings? Having said "There is no gratification in dispute; through dispute, great kings, having made enmity without cause, a certain tree deity, having formed a grudge against a black lion, has not reached even this entire cosmic cycle," he related the Phandana Jātaka. Then "One should not be dependent on others, great kings. For having been dependent on others, through the tale of a single hare, the herds of quadrupeds in the Himalayas extending three thousand yojanas plunged into the great ocean. Therefore one should not be dependent on others," having said this, he related the Pathaviṇḍriya Jātaka. Thereupon - "Sometimes, great kings, even the weak sees a fault and an opening of the strong; sometimes the strong of the weak. For even the Indian quail, a little bird, killed a noble elephant," having said this, he related the Laṭukikā Jātaka. Thus, having related three Jātakas for the purpose of appeasing the dispute, he related two Jātakas for the purpose of illustrating unity. How? Having said "For those who are united, great kings, no one is able to see an opening," he related the Rukkhadhamma Jātaka. Then "No one was able to see a flaw of those who were united, great kings. But when they quarrelled with one another, then the hunter's son, having deprived them of life, took them and went. There is no gratification in contention," having said this, he related the Vaṭṭaka Jātaka. Thus, having related these five Jātakas, at the conclusion he related the Attadaṇḍa Sutta.

The kings, pleased - "If the Teacher had not come, we would have killed each other with our own hands and set flowing a river of blood; we would not have seen our sons and brothers at the house-gate; there would have been no one even to carry a message and counter-message for us. In dependence on the Teacher, our lives were obtained. If, however, the Teacher had dwelt in a household, the kingship over the four great continents with their surrounding two thousand islands would have come into his possession, and he would have had more than a thousand sons; from that he would have gone about with a retinue of warriors alone. But he, having abandoned that success and having gone forth, attained the highest enlightenment; let him now too go about with a retinue of warriors indeed" - the inhabitants of both cities gave two hundred and fifty young men each. The Blessed One, having given them the going forth, went to the Great Wood. For those who had gone forth not by their own preference but through the influence of respect and reverence, discontent arose. Their former wives too sent messages to them, having said "Let the young masters be dissatisfied; the household life does not endure" and so on. They became even more dissatisfied.

The Blessed One, reflecting and having known their state of discontent, thought "These monks, while dwelling together with a Buddha such as myself, are dissatisfied; come, let me describe to them the beauty of Kuṇḍāla Lake and, having led them there, dispel their discontent" - and he described the beauty of Kuṇḍāla Lake. They wished to see it. Do you wish to see Kuṇḍāla Lake, monks? Yes, Blessed One. If so, come, let us go. Blessed One, how shall we go to a place that is the destination of those possessing supernormal power? You wish to go; I shall take you by my own power and go. Very well, venerable sir. Then the Blessed One, having taken five hundred monks, having flown up into the sky and having alighted at Kuṇḍāla Lake, said to those monks - "Monks, in this Kuṇḍāla Lake, the names of whatever fish you do not know, ask their names."

They asked, and the Blessed One spoke about each thing asked. Not only of fish, but having had them ask the names of trees in that jungle thicket, and of bipeds, quadrupeds, and birds at the foot of the mountain, he spoke about them. Then the Kuṇḍāla bird-king, seated on a stick gripped by two birds biting it with their beaks, comes surrounded by a flock of birds in front, behind, and on both sides. The monks, having seen him - "This one, venerable sir, must be the king of these birds; these are his retinue" - so we think. Just so, monks, this too is my lineage, my tradition. For now, venerable sir, we see these birds. But as to what the Blessed One said "This too is my lineage, my tradition," we wish to hear that. Do you wish to hear, monks? Yes, Blessed One. If so, listen - and having adorned it with three hundred verses, while relating the Kuṇḍāla Jātaka, he dispelled their discontent. At the conclusion of the teaching, all became established in the fruition of stream-entry, and through the path itself supernormal power too came to them. The Blessed One - "Let this much suffice for now for these monks" - having flown up into the sky, went to the Great Wood itself. Those monks too, at the time of going, having gone by the power of the One of Ten Powers, at the time of returning, by their own power, having surrounded the Blessed One, descended into the Great Wood.

The Blessed One, having sat down on the prepared seat, having addressed those monks - "Come, monks, sit down; I shall teach you a meditation subject for the abandoning of your mental defilements to be killed by the upper triad of paths" - he taught the meditation subject. The monks thought - "The Blessed One, having known our state of discontent, having led us to Lake Kuṇḍāla, dispelled our discontent; there, to us who had attained the fruition of stream-entry, he has now here given a meditation subject for the three paths. It is not fitting for us to pass the time merely thinking 'We are stream-enterers'; it is fitting for us to become like the highest persons" - they, having paid homage at the feet of the One of Ten Powers, having risen, having shaken out their sitting cloths, sat down separately at the roots of trees on cliff-overhangs.

The Blessed One thought - "These monks are by nature ones who have not abandoned their meditation subject; and for a monk who has obtained the method, there is no cause for weariness. Going along, going along, having developed insight, having attained arahantship - thinking 'We shall report the quality attained by each of us,' they will come to my presence. When these have come, the deities in the ten-thousand world-systems will assemble in a single world-system; there will be a great assembly; it is fitting for me to sit in a secluded place." Then, having prepared the Buddha-seat in a secluded place, he sat down.

The elder who had taken the meditation subject and gone at the very first attained arahantship together with the analytical knowledges. Then another, then another - all five hundred bloomed like lotuses in a lotus pond. The monk who had attained arahantship at the very first - thinking "I shall report to the Blessed One," having unfolded his cross-legged posture, having shaken out his sitting cloth, having risen, faced towards the One of Ten Powers. Thus another and yet another - all five hundred came in succession, like those entering a dining hall. The one who came first, having paid homage, having prepared his sitting cloth, having sat down to one side, wishing to report the quality he had attained - thinking "Is there indeed anyone else, or not?" having turned back, looking along the path of approach, he saw yet another, and saw yet another. Thus all of them, having come and sat down to one side, this one, being ashamed before that one, did not speak; this one, being ashamed before that one, did not speak. It is said that for those who have eliminated the mental corruptions there are two dispositions - The thought arises: "Oh, may the world with its gods quickly penetrate the quality attained by me!" But regarding the state of having attained, like a man who has found a treasure, he does not wish to report it to another.

Now, just as that noble assembly had settled down, like a great disc of a mirror made of silver raised up in the eastern direction, for the purpose of seeing the loveliness of the world adorned by the arising of a Buddha, free from these impurities - clouds, frost, smoke, dust, and Rāhu - from the eastern enclosure of Yugandhara, the full moon disc, resplendent as a silver wheel revolving held by the rim, having risen up, proceeded along the path of the wind. Thus at such a moment, at such a time, at such an instant, the Blessed One was dwelling among the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu in the Great Wood together with a large Community of monks, about five hundred monks, all of them Worthy Ones.

Therein, the Blessed One too was born in the lineage of Mahāsammata, and those five hundred monks too were born in the clan of Mahāsammata. The Blessed One too

was born in a warrior womb, and they too were born in warrior wombs. The Blessed One too had gone forth from royalty, and they too had gone forth from royalty. The Blessed One too, having abandoned the white parasol, having relinquished the wheel-turning sovereignty that was in his hands, went forth; and they too, having abandoned the white parasols, having relinquished the kingdoms that were in their hands, went forth. Thus the Blessed One, in a pure place, in a pure portion of the night, himself pure, with a pure retinue, without lust, with a retinue without lust, without hate, with a retinue without hate, without delusion, with a retinue without delusion, free from craving, with a retinue free from craving, free from defilement, with a retinue free from defilement, peaceful, with a peaceful retinue, tamed, with a tamed retinue, liberated, with a liberated retinue, shone exceedingly. This is called the ground for praise; as much as one is able, that much should be said. Thus with reference to these monks it was said - "About five hundred monks, all of them Worthy Ones."

"Mostly" means the greater number had gathered together; the slow ones had not gathered together - the unconscious deities, the immaterial-sphere deities, and the deities who had attained meditative attainment. Herein, this is the order of the gathering: it is said that the deities in the vicinity of the Great Wood stirred - "Come, friends, seeing the Buddha is indeed very helpful, hearing the Teaching is very helpful, seeing the Community of monks is very helpful, come, let us come!" - making a great sound, having come and having paid homage to the Blessed One and to those who had attained arahantship at that very moment, the ones who had eliminated the mental corruptions, they stood to one side. By this very method, having heard the sound of those and those deities, at intervals of half a league, a league, half a yojana, a yojana, and so on, in the Himalayas extending three thousand yojanas, in three times sixty-three thousand cities, in ninety-nine hundred thousand market towns, in ninety-six ten million hundred thousand ports, in fifty-six jewel mines - thus in the whole of Jambudīpa, in Pubbavideha, in Aparagoyāna, in Uttarakuru, in the two thousand minor islands - thus in the entire world-circle, then in the second and third world-circles - thus it should be understood that deities gathered together in the ten-thousand world-circles. For the ten-thousand world-circles are here intended as "ten world systems." Therefore it was said - "And deities from ten world systems had for the most part gathered together."

With the deities thus gathered together, the entire interior of the world-circle up to the Brahmā world was full, like needles placed continuously in a needle case. Therein, the height of the Brahmā world should be understood thus. It is said that a stone equal in size to the seven-storeyed pinnacle building of the Brazen Palace, standing in the Brahmā world and thrown downwards, would reach the earth in four months. In such a great space, just as flowers thrown from below or smoke cannot go upwards, or mustard seeds thrown from above cannot descend below, finding no gap - so continuously were the deities. Just as the sitting place of a wheel-turning monarch is unconfined, and influential warriors who come one after another obtain space indeed, but further and further away it is exceedingly confined, just so the sitting place of the Blessed One was unconfined, and influential deities and Great Brahmās who came one after another obtained space indeed. Moreover, in the region very near to the Blessed One, in the very manner stated in the Mahāparinibbāna, in a spot the size of the pricking of a hair-tip, ten, or twenty, or at the very furthest thirty deities, having

created extremely subtle individual existences, stood. Sixty by sixty deities stood.

"Belonging to the Pure Abodes" means of those dwelling in the Pure Abodes. The Pure Abodes are the five Brahmā worlds, the residences of the pure ones, the non-returners who have eliminated the mental corruptions. "This occurred to him" - why did it occur? It is said that those brahmā gods, having entered into meditative attainment and having emerged at the determined time, looking at the Brahmā abode, saw it empty, like a dining hall after the meal. Then, reflecting "Where have the brahmā gods gone?" having known of the great gathering - "This gathering is great, we have been left behind, and for those left behind space is difficult to obtain; therefore, going, let us not be empty-handed but having each composed a verse, let us go. By that we shall make known our arrival at the great gathering, and we shall speak praise of the One of Ten Powers." Thus, because they reflected after having emerged from the attainment, this occurred to them.

332. "Appeared before the Blessed One" - in the Pāḷi it is stated as though they descended right at the place facing the Blessed One's presence, but the meaning here should not be understood thus. Rather, while still standing in the Brahma world, having prepared their verses, one descended at the eastern rim of the world-system, one at the southern rim of the world-system, one at the western rim of the world-system, and one descended at the northern rim of the world-system. Then the Brahmā who had descended at the eastern rim of the world-system, having entered upon the blue kasiṇa, having emitted blue rays, as if putting on a jewelled hide for the deities of the ten-thousand world-systems, having made known his own arrival - the Buddha's path, indeed, cannot be spread over by anyone; therefore, having come along the well-trodden Buddha's path itself, having paid respect to the Blessed One, he stood to one side. Standing to one side, he spoke the verse prepared by himself.

The Brahmā who had descended at the southern rim of the world-system too, having entered upon the yellow kasiṇa, having emitted yellow rays of golden radiance, as if wrapping the deities of the ten-thousand world-systems in a golden cloth, having made known his own arrival, stood in the same way. The Brahmā who had descended at the western rim of the world-system too, having entered upon the red kasiṇa, having emitted red rays, as if encircling the deities of the ten-thousand world-systems with an excellent red woollen blanket, having made known his own arrival, stood in the same way. The Brahmā who had descended at the northern rim of the world-system too, having entered upon the white kasiṇa, having emitted white rays, as if wrapping the deities of the ten-thousand world-systems in a jasmine cloth, having made known his own arrival, stood in the same way.

But in the Pāḷi, "appeared before the Blessed One. Then those deities, having paid respect to the Blessed One, stood to one side" - thus the appearing before and the state of having paid respect and standing to one side are stated as if at one moment, but that occurred in this sequence; however, it was shown combining them together. But the speaking of the verses was stated in the Pāḷi separately indeed.

Therein, "great assembly" means a great multitude. "Pavana" is called a jungle thicket. By both, the Blessed One said: "Today in this jungle thicket there is a great multitude, a great assemblage." Then, to show those for whom that assemblage was, he said "groups of gods have come together." Therein, "groups of gods" means hosts

of gods. "We have come to this Teaching assembly" - having seen the groups of gods thus assembled, we too have come to this Teaching gathering. Why? "To see the unconquered Community" - unconquered by anyone, having crushed the three Māras this very day, victorious in battle - we have come for the purpose of seeing this unconquered Community; this is the meaning. That Brahmā, having spoken this verse, having paid respect to the Blessed One, stood at the eastern rim of the world-system itself.

Then the second, having come in the manner already stated, spoke. Therein, "there the monks" means the monks at that place of assemblage. "Concentrated" means they applied themselves with concentration. "They made their own minds straight" means they all removed their minds from the states of crookedness, distortion, and dishonesty, and made them straight. "Like a charioteer having taken the reins" means just as a charioteer, when the Sindh horses are going evenly, with goad laid down, having taken all the reins, stands neither urging nor restraining, so all these five hundred monks, endowed with six-factored equanimity, with guarded doors, guard their faculties, the wise ones; we have come here to see these, Blessed One. He too, having gone, stood at his original place.

Then the third, having come in the manner already stated, spoke. Therein, "having cut the stake" means having cut the stake of lust, hate, and delusion. "The bar" means the bar of lust, hate, and delusion itself. "The gate-post" too means the gate-post of lust, hate, and delusion itself. "Having uprooted, without longing" means these monks, being without longing due to the absence of the longing of craving, having uprooted, having abolished the gate-post. "They walk about" means they wander on an unobstructed journey in the four directions. "Pure" means free from mental impurities. "Spotless" means stainless. This is a synonym for that very thing. "By the one with vision" means by the one endowed with vision through five eyes. "Well tamed" means tamed through the eye too, tamed through the ear too, through the nose too, through the tongue too, through the body too, through the mind too. "Young elephants" means young elephants. We have come to see these young elephants tamed by such an unsurpassed teacher of meditation, Blessed One. He too, having gone, stood at his original place.

Then the fourth, having come in the manner already stated, spoke. Therein, "gatāse" means gone by means of going for refuge free from doubt. He too, having gone, stood at his original place.

Explanation of the Assembly of Deities

333. Then the Blessed One, looking from the surface of the earth up to the boundary of the rim of the world-circle, up to the Akaniṭṭha Brahmā world, having seen the assembly of deities, thought - "Great is this assembly of deities, but the monks do not know of such a great assembly of deities; come, let me tell them" - having thus thought, "Then the Blessed One addressed the monks" - all should be expanded. Therein, "etaparamā" means "this is the supreme measure of these" - thus "etaparamā." But now, due to the absence of Buddhas, the third occasion "Monks, those who are at present" was not stated. Why did he say "I will tell, monks"? For the purpose of generating pliancy of mind in the deities. It is said that the deities thought - "At such a great assembly the Blessed One will speak the names and clans of only

the influential deities; what will he speak of those of little influence?" Then the Blessed One, reflecting "What are these deities thinking?" - as if inserting his hand through their mouths and crushing the flesh of their hearts, as if seizing a thief together with his goods - having known the disposition of their minds - thought "I shall speak the names and clans of all the deities, both of little influence and of great influence, who have come from the ten-thousand world-circles."

Buddhas are great, these are distinctions of beings: whatever in the world with its gods has been seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought after, pondered over by the mind - there is nothing whatsoever anywhere, neither a visual object among visual objects classified by way of blue and so on, nor separately a sound and other objects among sound objects and so on classified by way of drum sounds and so on, that does not come into the range of their knowledge-door. As he said -

"Whatever, monks, in the world with its gods, etc. among the generation with its gods and humans, has been seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought after, pondered over by the mind - that I know, that I see, that I have directly known."

Thus the Blessed One, whose knowledge is unobstructed everywhere, divided all those deities into two portions by way of the capable and the incapable. Beings described by the method beginning with "possessed of obstruction by kamma" are called incapable. Even if they are dwelling in the same monastery, the Buddhas do not look upon them. But the opposite are called capable; even if they are dwelling far away, having gone, they treat them kindly. Therefore, even at that assembly of deities, having set aside those who were incapable, he comprehended the capable ones. Having comprehended them - "This many here are of lustful temperament, this many are of hateful temperament, this many are of deluded temperament" - thus he made six portions by way of temperament. Then, reflecting upon the proclamation of the Teaching suitable for them - "For the deities of lustful temperament I shall teach the Sammāparibbājaniya Sutta, for those of hateful temperament the Kalahavivāda Sutta, for those of deluded temperament the Mahābyūha Sutta, for those of discursive-thinking temperament the Cūḷabyūha Sutta, for those of faith temperament the Tuvattaka Practice, for those of intelligence temperament I shall teach the Purābheda Sutta" - having thus determined the teaching, he again attended in mind to that assembly - "Should they know by one's own disposition, or by another's disposition, by the arising of an occasion, or by way of questioning?" Then, having known "They should know by way of questioning," and "Is there indeed anyone capable of taking the disposition of the deities and asking a question by way of temperament?" - he saw that "Among those five hundred monks, not even one is able." Then, having collected together the eighty great disciples and the two chief disciples, having seen "They too are not able," he thought "If there were an Individually Enlightened One, would he be able?" Having known "He too would not be able," he collected together thinking "Would anyone among Sakka, Suyāma, and so on be able?" For if anyone among them were able, having had him ask, he himself would answer; but not even anyone among them is able.

Then this occurred to him - "Only a Buddha like me would be able; but is there another Buddha anywhere?" - having spread his infinite knowledge across infinite world systems, looking, he did not see another Buddha. And this is not wonderful, that he should not now see one equal to himself; even on the day of his birth, by the

method stated in the explanation of the Discourse on the Supreme Net, not seeing one equal to himself - he roared the irrefutable lion's roar: "I am the foremost in the world." Thus, not having seen another equal to himself, he thought - "If I were to ask and I myself were to answer, these deities would not be able to penetrate it. But when another Buddha himself asks and I answer, it will be marvellous, and the deities will be able to penetrate it; therefore I shall create a mind-created buddha" - having attained the meditative absorption that is the basis for direct knowledge, and having emerged - "Let the taking of bowl and robe, the looking ahead and looking aside, the bending and stretching be just like mine" - having done the preliminary work with sensual-sphere consciousnesses, he determined with fine-material-sphere consciousness, as if the disc of the moon, rising over the eastern enclosure of Yugandhara, were breaking through and coming forth.

The assembly of gods, having seen that - said "Has another moon also risen, friend?" Then, having left aside the moon, when it came nearer, "It is not the moon, the sun has risen;" again when it came nearer, "It is not the sun, it is a heavenly mansion;" again when it came nearer, "It is not a heavenly mansion, it is a young god;" again when it came nearer, "It is not a young god, it is a Great Brahmā;" again when it came nearer, "It is not a Great Brahmā, another Buddha also has come, friend," they said. Therein the worldling deities thought - "For just one Buddha this is the gathering of deities; for two, how great will it be!" The noble deities thought - "In one world system there are not two Buddhas; surely another single Buddha similar to himself has been created by the Blessed One."

Then, while that very assembly of gods was watching, the mind-created buddha, having come and without paying homage to the One of Ten Powers, sat down on a seat prepared at a place directly facing him, made exactly equal. The Blessed One too had the thirty-two marks of a great man, the created one too had exactly thirty-two; from the Blessed One's body too six-coloured rays issued forth, from the created one's too; the Blessed One's bodily rays struck against the created one's body, the created one's bodily rays struck against the Blessed One's body. Those, having risen up from the bodies of both Buddhas, having reached the Akaniṭṭha realm, having turned back from there, having descended to the limit of the heads of the deities, became established at the rim of the world-circle. The entire interior of the world-circle shone like a shrine house bound with curved golden rafters. The deities of the ten-thousand world-systems, gathered in a single world-circle, having entered into the interior of the rays of the two Buddhas, stood there. The mind-created buddha, even while sitting down, praising the abandoning of mental defilements on the enlightenment seat of the One of Ten Powers -

"I ask the sage of abundant wisdom,
One who has crossed over, gone beyond, attained final Nibbāna, one who is inwardly firm;
Having gone forth from home, having dispelled sensual pleasures,
How should that monk rightly wander in the world?"

Spoke this verse. The Teacher, having thought "First, for the purpose of generating pliancy of mind in the deities, I shall speak the names and clans of those who have come and come," said beginning with "I will tell, monks."

334. Therein, "I will recite a verse" means I will set forth a combination of words defined by syllables and terms. "Where the terrestrial deities are attached to that" means in whichever places the terrestrial deities are dependent on each respective place. By "those who are attached to mountain caves" and so on, he spoke the praise of those monks; the meaning is those monks who are dependent on mountain hollows. "Resolute" means with minds directed forth. "Concentrated" means undistracted.

"Many" means a multitude of people. "Like lions secluded" means hidden like lions, having attained solitude. "Having overcome terror" means standing having overpowered terror; the meaning stated is fearless. "With pure minds, purified" means having become pure in mind, purified. "Clear and untroubled" means clear and untroubled.

"Having known more than five hundred" means having known more than five hundred monks together with the Perfectly Enlightened One. "In the forest near Kapilavatthu" means in the jungle thicket that had grown near Kapilavatthu. "Then the Teacher addressed" means then he addressed. "Disciples delighted in the teaching" means disciples, because of having become through hearing at the end of his proclamation of the Teaching, and because of being delighted in the teaching of the threefold training, delighted in the teaching. All this - From the expression "I will recite a verse," he speaks as if it were spoken by another.

"Groups of gods have come, cognise them, monks" means "cognise them with the divine eye" - he spoke this for the purpose of the resolution of the divine eye knowledge of those monks. "And they made ardent effort, having heard the Buddha's teaching" means those monks, having heard that teaching of the Buddha, at that very instant made energy for that purpose.

Knowledge appeared to those who had made just that much ardent effort. Of what kind? The divine eye knowledge, the seeing of non-human beings, arose. That was not produced by them having done preliminary work at that moment. For that was accomplished through the noble path itself. But only the mere resolution for the purpose of seeing non-human beings was made for it. The Teacher too - With reference to this very thing - "There is knowledge in you; having brought it forth, by that cognise them" - he said "cognise them, monks."

"Some saw a hundred" means among those monks, certain monks saw a hundred non-human beings. "A thousand, then seventy thousand" means some a thousand. Some seventy thousand.

"A hundred thousand" means some saw a hundred thousand. "Some saw without end" means they saw an extensive number; the meaning is they saw even what was unlimited by way of hundreds and by way of thousands. Why? Because all directions were pervaded, they were filled and completely full.

"And having directly known all that" means having known all that which was seen by each one among them. "Having analysed, the one with eyes" means the Teacher, the one with eyes through five eyes, having defined as if directly perceiving a line on the palm of the hand. "Then he addressed" means he spoke the previously stated verse

itself for the purpose of proclaiming names and clans. "Cognise those, see, look at those whom I will explain to you" - this is the connection here. "With words" means with utterances. "In due order" means in succession.

335. "Seven thousand demons, terrestrial, belonging to Kapilavatthu": it says that for now, here, seven thousand are terrestrial demons arisen in dependence on Kapilavatthu. "Possessing supernormal power" means endowed with divine supernormal power. "Brilliant" means accomplished in splendour. "Beautiful" means accomplished in bodily beauty. "Famous" means accomplished in retinue. "Rejoicing, they proceeded" means they came with gladdened minds. "To the forest, to the assembly of monks" means they came to this Great Wood, to the presence of the monks, for the purpose of seeing the monks. Or alternatively, "assembly" means multitude; the meaning is also that they came for seeing the multitude of monks.

"Six thousand from Himavā, demons of diverse colours": six thousand demons arisen on the Himavā mountain, and all of them are of diverse colours by way of blue and other colours.

"From Sātagira, three thousand": three thousand demons arisen on the Sātagira mountain.

"Thus these sixteen thousand": all these together are sixteen thousand.

"From Vessāmitta, five hundred": five hundred arisen on the Vessāmitta mountain.

"Kumbhīra of Rājagaha": a demon named Kumbhīra arisen in the city of Rājagaha.

"Whose dwelling is Vepulla": his dwelling is the Vepulla mountain; the meaning is his place of residence. "More than a hundred thousand demons attend upon him": more than a hundred thousand demons attend upon him. "Kumbhīra of Rājagaha, he too came to the forest, to the assembly": that Kumbhīra too, with his retinue, came to this forest, to the assembly of monks, for the purpose of seeing.

336. "The king rules the eastern direction, Dhataratṭha governs" means he instructs the eastern direction. "The lord of the gandhabbas" means the chief of the gandhabbas in all four directions. All of them are subject to his authority. "The great king of fame" means this great king has a great retinue.

"His sons too are many, named after Inda, of great power" means that Dhataratṭha has many sons of great power; they are all bearers of the name of Sakka, the king of gods.

"Virūḷha rules that" means Virūḷha instructs that direction.

"His sons too" means his sons too are of just such a kind. But in the Pāḷi they write "mahabbalā." In the commentary, in all instances the reading is "mahābalā."

"Dhataratṭha in the eastern direction, Virūḷhaka in the south;
Virūpakka in the west, Kuvera in the northern direction.

These four great kings, all around the four directions;
Stood shining brightly, in the forest near Kapilavatthu."

But these verses were spoken by way of including all.

And here this is the meaning - In the ten-thousand world-systems there are great kings named Dhataratṭha. All of them too, with retinues of hundreds of thousands of crores upon hundreds of thousands of crores of gandhabbas, having come, stood filling the interior of the world-circle from the Great Forest of Kapilavatthu onwards in the eastern direction. Likewise Virūḷhaka and the others in the southern direction and so on. Therefore he said - "All around the four directions, stood shining brightly." For this is what is meant - "Having come from the world-circles all around, in the four directions, they stood on the mountain tops, blazing well like masses of fire." But since they had come with reference to the forest of Kapilavatthu itself, therefore even though they stood filling the world-circle, equal in extent to the world-circle - They were spoken of as "in the forest near Kapilavatthu."

337. "Their deceitful slaves came, fraudulent and deceptive": there are slaves of those great kings who are of crooked conduct, engaged in deceit characterised by the concealment of evil done, who are called "fraudulent" because of deceiving the world through deceptions both in one's presence and in one's absence, and are called "deceptive" because of being endowed with deceit and fraudulence; they too came - this is the meaning. "Māyā, Kuṭeṇḍu, Viṭeṇḍu, Viṭucca, together with Viṭuṭo": those slaves are all indeed jugglers. But here by name, one is named Kuṭeṇḍu, one is named Viṭeṇḍu. But in the Pāḷi they write "Veṭeṇḍu." One is named Viṭucca, one is named Viṭuṭo. "Together with" means that Viṭuṭo too came together with them.

"Candana and Kāmasetṭha, Kinnighaṇḍu and Nighaṇḍu": another is named Kinnighaṇḍu. But in the Pāḷi they write "Kinnughaṇḍu." "And Nighaṇḍu": another is named Nighaṇḍu; this many are the slaves. But those after this -

"Panāda and Opamañña, and Mātali the charioteer of the gods;
And the gandhabba Cittasena, King Naḷa, Janesabha;
Pañcasikha came too, Timbarū and Sūriyavacchasā."

These are the kings of the gods. Therein, "charioteer of the gods" means the charioteer of the gods. "Cittasena" means Citta and Sena and Cittasena. "Gandhabba" means this Cittasena is a young god belonging to the gandhabba host; and not only he, all those beginning with Panāda are indeed gandhabbas. "King Naḷa" means one young god named Naḷakāra. "Janesabha" means the young god Janavasabha. "Pañcasikha came too" means the young god Pañcasikha too came. "Timbarū" means the gandhabba king of the gods named Timbarū. "Sūriyavacchasā" means his very own daughter.

"These and other kings, gandhabbas together with their kings": these gandhabba kings mentioned by name and others too, many gandhabbas together with those kings. "Rejoicing, they proceeded to the forest, to the assembly of monks" means with joyful and delighted minds they came to this forest, to the assembly of the community of monks - this is the meaning.

338. "Then came the serpents from Nāgasa, the Vesālā together with the Tacchaka" means the serpents dwelling at Nāgasa Lake and those dwelling at Vesālī came together with the assembly of Tacchaka serpents - this is the meaning.

"Kambalassatara" means Kambala and Assatara. These, it is said, dwell at the foot of

Sineru, great serpents of great influence who cannot be seized even by supaññas. "The Pāyāga together with their kinsmen" means those dwelling at the Payāga ford came together with their congregation of kinsmen.

"The Yāmunā and Dhataratṭhā" means the serpents dwelling in the Yamunā and those arisen in the Dhataratṭha clan. "Erāvaṇa the great serpent" means Erāvaṇa is a young god; by birth he is not a serpent. But he is referred to by the conventional expression for serpents. "He too came" means he too came.

"Those who forcibly seize the serpent kings" means those who, overcome by greed, having acted with violence, carry off and seize the serpents of the aforementioned kind. "The divine twice-born birds with pure vision" means divine by divine power; twice-born because they are born twice - from the mother's womb and from the egg-shell; birds because of being endowed with wings; of pure vision because of having eyes capable of seeing serpents even at a distance of a hundred yojanas or a thousand yojanas. "Through the sky they arrived in the midst of the forest" means they arrived at this Great Wood through the sky itself. "The variegated supaññas - such is their name" means their name is "variegated supaññas."

"There was then safety for the serpent kings, the Buddha made security from the supaññas" means therefore all of them, addressing one another with smooth words, conversing like friends and like kinsmen, being joyful, embracing, taking each other's hands, placing hands on each other's shoulders, with joyful and delighted minds. "The serpents and supaññas made the Buddha their refuge" means they went for refuge to the Buddha himself.

339. "Conquered by the one with the thunderbolt in hand" means conquered by Indra, the king of gods. "The titans dwelling in the ocean" means those dwelling in the great ocean; on account of Sujātā, the titan maiden, all these are brothers of Vāsava, possessing supernormal power, famous.

Among them, "the Kālakañcas, the great terrifying ones" means the Kālakañcas, having created great terrifying individual existences, came. "The titans, the Dānaveghasa archers" means the Dānaveghasa are other bow-bearing titans. "Vepacitti and Sucitti, Pahārāda together with Namuci" means the titan Vepacitti, the titan Sucitti, and these titans, and Namuci too - Māra the young god came together with them. These titans are dwellers in the great ocean; this one is a dweller in the Paranimmitavasavattī god realm - why did he come together with them? Because of being without desire. For they too are without desire and incapable, and this one is just such. Therefore he came running together according to his element.

"And a hundred sons of Bali" means a hundred sons of Bali, the great titan. "All named after Verocana" means all bore the name of their maternal uncle Rāhu himself. "Having arrayed the army of Bali" means having arrayed their own army of Bali, all having become as if fully armoured. "They approached the august Rāhu" means they approached Rāhu, the lord of titans. "Now is the time, venerable sir" means may it be well for you; the meaning is it is time for you to approach the forest, to the assembly of monks, for seeing the Community of monks.

340. "The water gods and earth gods, fire and air gods came there": gods named "water" and so on, arisen having done the preliminary work on the water kasiṇa and so on, came. "The Varuṇa gods and Vāraṇa gods, Soma together with Yasa": the Varuṇa deity, the Vāraṇa deity, the Soma deity - gods named thus, and the meaning is that they came accompanied by the god named Yasa. "The friendliness and compassion bodily gods": gods arisen having done the preliminary work on the meditative absorption of friendliness and the meditative absorption of compassion. "Famous gods came": these gods of great fame too came.

"These ten classes in ten ways, all of diverse colours": those ten groups of gods standing in ten ways, all of diverse colours by way of blue and so on, came - this is the meaning.

"The Veṇḍu gods": the Veṇḍu deity and. "And Sahali": the Sahali deity and. "The Asamā and the two Yama gods": the Asamā deity and the two twin gods. "The gods dependent on the moon came, having put the moon in front": the gods dependent on the moon came having put the moon in front. Likewise the gods dependent on the sun, having put the sun in front. "Having put the constellations in front": the gods dependent on the constellations too came having put the constellations in front. "The slow-moving cloud gods came": the wind rain cloud gods, the cloud rain cloud gods, the hot rain cloud gods - all these cloud-dwelling gods are called "slow-moving cloud gods." They too came - this is the meaning. "Vāsava, foremost of the Vasu gods, Sakka came, the first of givers": Vāsava, foremost of the Vasu deities, who is called Sakka and the first of givers, he too came.

"These ten classes in ten ways": these too are ten groups of gods that came in ten ways. "All of diverse colours": of diverse colours by way of blue and so on.

"Then came the Sahabhū gods": then the gods named Sahabhū came. "Blazing like flames of fire": blazing like flames of fire. "Jalamaggi and Sikhārī": it is also said that these are their names. "The Ariṭṭhaka and Roja": the Ariṭṭhaka gods and the Roja gods. "Shining like flax flowers": these gods are named the flax flower gods. For the radiance of their bodies is similar to flax flowers; therefore they are called "shining like flax flowers."

"The Varuṇā and Sahadhammā": these are two groups. "The Accutā and Anejakā": the Accutā deity and the Anejakā deity. "The Sūleyya and Rucirā came": the Sūleyya and the Rucirā came. "The Vāsavanesī came": the gods named Vāsavanesī came. "These ten classes in ten ways": these too are ten groups of gods that came in ten ways.

"The Samānā and Mahāsamānā": the Samānā and the Mahāsamānā. "The Mānusā and Mānusuttamā": the Mānusā and the Mānusuttamā. "The corrupted by play came, the corrupted by mind came": the gods corrupted by play and corrupted by mind came.

"Then came the Haraya gods" means the gods named Hari came. "And those who dwell in blood-red" means those dwelling in blood-red also came. "The Pāragā and Mahāpāragā" means these two kinds came. "These ten classes in ten ways": these too are ten groups of gods that came in ten ways.

"The Sukkā, Karambhā, and Aruṇā came, together with the Veghanasā" means these three beginning with the Sukkā, and together with them the Veghanasā also came. "The Odātagayhā, the eminent ones" means the eminent gods named Odātagayhā came. "The wise gods came" means the gods named Vicakkhaṇā came.

"The Sadāmattā and Hāragajā" means the Sadāmattā and the Hāragajā. "And the famous Missakā" means the Missakā gods accomplished in fame also. "Pajjunna came thundering" means the king of gods Pajjunna came thundering. "He who rains upon the directions" means to whatever direction he goes, there the rain god rains. "These ten classes in ten ways" means these ten groups of gods also came in ten ways.

"The Khemiyā, Tusitā, Yāmā" means the Khemiyā gods, those dwelling in the Tusita city, and those dwelling in the Yāma god world. "And the famous Kathakā" means the Kathaka gods accomplished in fame also. But in the Pāḷi they write "kaṭṭhakā ca." "The Lambitakā and Lāmasetṭhā" means the Lambitaka gods and the Lāmasetṭha gods. "The Jotināmā and Āsā" means there are gods named Joti, shining like a mass of fire made of reeds on a mountain top, and those and the Āsā gods came - this is the meaning. But in the Pāḷi they write "jātināmā." The Āsā deities are called "āsavā" by means of desire. The Nimmānatī came, then came the Paranimmitā. "These ten classes in ten ways": these too are ten groups of gods that came in ten ways.

"These sixty orders of gods" means these six decads beginning with "the water gods" and so on are sixty orders of gods, all of diverse colours by way of blue and so on. "Came according to their names" means they came by way of name, by portion of name. "And others similar together with them" means whatever other gods in the remaining world-systems who are similar to them both in colour and in name, just like these - they too came indeed; thus with a single term, making them as if a bundle, as if a basket, he indicates all the deities.

Having thus indicated the groups of gods in the ten thousand world systems, now showing the purpose for which they came, he spoke the verse beginning with "free from birth." Its meaning is - "Birth has departed, gone for him" - the noble Community is called "free from birth"; that noble Community free from birth, without barrenness due to the absence of the barrennesses of lust, hate, and delusion, a crosser of the mental floods because of standing firm having crossed the four mental floods, without mental corruptions due to the absence of the four mental corruptions - "we shall see, we shall behold." Because of having crossed those very mental floods, "a crosser of the mental floods"; because of non-performance of offence, "a serpent." "Gone beyond darkness" means gone beyond the state of darkness; "we shall see, we shall behold the One of Ten Powers shining with splendour like the moon" - for this purpose all of them came according to their names, and others similar together with them.

341. Now, showing the brahmā gods, he said beginning with "Subrahmā and Paramatta." Therein, "Subrahmā" is one brahmā god. Paramatta too is also a brahmā god. "Sons together with the one of supernormal power" means these noble brahmā gods, sons of the Buddha, the Blessed One, the one possessing supernormal power, came together. "Sanaṅkumāra and Tissa" means Sanaṅkumāra and Tissa the Great Brahmā. "He too came" means he too came.

"A thousand Brahma worlds, over which the Great Brahmā presides;

Reborn, brilliant, of fearsome body, glorious."

Here, "a thousand Brahma worlds" means a thousand Great Brahmās came, who are capable of pervading light in one thousand world-systems with one finger and in ten thousand world-systems with ten fingers. "Over which the Great Brahmā presides" means where each Great Brahmā stands having overcome the other brahmā gods. "Reborn" means arisen in the Brahma world. "Brilliant" means accomplished in might. "Of fearsome body" means having a large body, with an individual existence equal in measure to two or three Magadhan village territories. "Glorious" means endowed with fame reckoned as the splendour of his individual existence.

"Ten lords came here, each wielding power individually" means in that thousand of brahmā gods, those who wield power individually, each one separately - ten such lords, Great Brahmās, came. "And from their midst came Hārīta, surrounded by his retinue" means from the midst of those brahmā gods, the Great Brahmā named Hārīta came, with a retinue of a hundred thousand brahmā gods.

342. "And when all those had come forward, the gods with Indra, including the Brahmās" means all those groups of gods that had come with Sakka, the king of the gods, as their foremost, and the groups of Brahmās that had come with Hārīta Mahābrahmā as their foremost. "Māra's army advanced" means Māra's army had come forth. "See the foolishness of the Dark One" means see the foolishness of the black one, Māra.

"Come, seize them, bind them" - thus he commanded his own assembly. "May they be bound by lust for you" means may this entire assembly of gods of yours be bound by lust. "Surround them on all sides, let none of you release any of them" means let not even one of you release even one of them. "Mā vo muñcethā" is also a reading; the meaning is the same.

"Thus there the great-armed Dark One sent forth his army" means thus there at the great assembly, the great-armed Māra sent forth Māra's army. "Having struck the ground with his palm" means having struck the surface of the earth with his hand. "Having made a terrifying sound" means having made a frightful sound for the purpose of displaying Māra's terrifying spectacle.

"Like a rain cloud of the rainy season, thundering with lightning" means thundering with a great roar like a rainy-season cloud with lightning. "Then he turned back" means at that time that Māra, having displayed that terrifying spectacle, turned back. "Enraged, not in control of himself" means thoroughly angry, infuriated, being unable to bring anyone under his control, not in control of himself, not under his own mastery, having become unwilling by his own authority, he turned back. The Blessed One, it is said, knew: "This Māra, having seen this great assembly, thinking 'I shall create an obstacle to full realisation,' has sent forth Māra's army in between and is displaying Māra's terrifying spectacle." And this is the natural way of the Blessed One: where there will be no full realisation, there he does not prevent Māra from displaying a terrifying spectacle. But where there is full realisation, there he determines so that the assembly neither sees Māra's form nor hears his sound. And at

this assembly there would be a great full realisation; therefore he determined so that the deities neither saw his form nor heard his sound. Therefore it was said: "Then he turned back, enraged, not in control of himself."

343. "And having directly known all that, having analysed, the one with eyes" means the Blessed One, having known all that and having defined it.

"Māra's army has advanced, cognise them, monks" means: monks, Māra's army has advanced; you should cognise them suitably for yourselves; he says "attain fruition attainment." "They made ardent effort" means they began to put forth energy for the purpose of entering fruition attainment. "They departed from those without lust" means Māra and Māra's army departed from afar from the noble ones who were without lust. "They did not stir even a hair of theirs" means they did not stir even the hairs of those who were without lust. Then Māra spoke this verse concerning the Community of monks -

"All victorious in battle, gone beyond fear, glorious;
They rejoice together with beings, those disciples renowned among people."

Therein, "they rejoice together with beings" means they rejoice and are delighted together with the noble ones who have come to be, who have arisen in the Dispensation of the One of Ten Powers. "Renowned among people" means well-known among people, famous, recognised.

Now this discourse called the Mahāsamaya Sutta is dear and agreeable to the deities; therefore, by one speaking a blessing at newly established places, this very discourse should be recited. It is said that the deities wander about with ears inclined, thinking "We shall hear this discourse." At the conclusion of the teaching, a hundred thousand koṭis of deities attained arahantship; there is no counting of stream-enterers and so on.

And regarding the state of its being dear and agreeable to the deities, this is the story - It is said that at the Koṭipabbata monastery, at the door of the Nāga rock cell, in an ironwood tree, one goddess dwelt. One young monk was reciting this discourse inside the rock cell. The goddess, having heard, at the conclusion of the discourse gave applause in a loud voice. Who is this? I, venerable sir, am a goddess. Why did you give applause? Venerable sir, having heard this discourse on the day when the One of Ten Powers sat in the Great Wood and taught it, today I have heard it again. Without omitting even a single syllable of what was spoken by the Blessed One, this Teaching has been well learnt by you. Was it heard by you when the One of Ten Powers was teaching? Yes, venerable sir. It is said there was a great gathering of deities; where were you standing when you heard?

I, venerable sir, am a deity dwelling in the Great Wood. But when the influential deities came, I did not obtain a place in the Indian subcontinent. Then, having come to this island of Tambapaṇṇi, having stood at the port of Jambukola, I began to listen. There too, as the influential deities came, retreating gradually, I entered the water going up to the neck in the ocean behind Mahāgāma in the Rohaṇa province, and standing there, I heard. From your standing place, do you see the Teacher far away,

O deity? What are you saying, venerable sir? The Teacher, expounding the Teaching in the Great Wood, thinking "He is looking continuously at me alone," being filled with reverential fear, I hid myself among the waves.

On that day, it is said, a hundred thousand koṭis of deities attained arahantship; did you too then attain arahantship? There is not, venerable sir. Did you attain the fruition of non-returning, methinks? There is not, venerable sir. Did you attain the fruition of once-returning, methinks? There is not, venerable sir. It is said that the deities who attained the three paths passed beyond the path of counting; did you become a stream-enterer, methinks? The deity, being ashamed because of having attained only the fruition of stream-entry on that day, said "The noble one asks what should not be asked." Thereupon that monk said to her - "But is it possible, O deity, to show your individual existence to us?" It is not possible, venerable sir, to show the entire body; I shall show the noble one just a finger-joint's measure. She put her finger through the keyhole facing the inside of the rock cell, and it was as if a thousand moons and a thousand suns were rising. The goddess, having paid homage to the young monk, saying "Be diligent, venerable sir," departed. Thus this discourse is dear and agreeable to the deities; the deities cherish it.

*Thus in the Sumaṅgalavilāsinī, the Commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya,
the explanation of the Discourse on the Great Congregation 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.

PDF Creation Date: 14 September 2026

HOW TO CITE

PaliVerse (2026). Commentaries. The Canon of Discourses - Commentaries. 1. The Collection of the Long Discourses - Commentaries. 2. Commentary on the Great Chapter. 7. Commentary on the Discourse on the Great Congregation
Retrieved from paliverse.org

© 2026 The PaliVerse Project · All Rights Reserved
Centre for Study and Practice of Theravāda Buddhism
Civic Non-Profit Company registered in Greece
This PDF may be freely distributed for study and practice.

PaliVerse.org