

WHY THE BUDDHA SUFFERED

APADĀNA TRANSLATION BY ĀNANDAJOTI BHIKKHU



Why the Buddha Suffered
The Traditions about the Buddha
known as
The Connection with Previous Deeds

a translation of the verses in

Apadāna 39.10

and their commentary in

Visuddhajanavilāsiṇī

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Introduction

In preparing this text and translation for publication I have divided it into a number of versions. In the Buddhist Texts and Studies section will be found the Pāḷi Text together with the variant readings. This is a more technical work dealing with the establishment of the text, and considers the text from the point of view of its grammar and prosody, and gives a metrical analysis of the verses.

In the Texts and Translations section I present the full Text and Translation with annotations which help to explain matters that may not be clear from the text itself. I have retained variants that give a significantly different reading in this edition, together with their translation, including verses and lines found only in one edition. The translation here follows the text quite closely to allow for reading and study of the latter.

In the English section there is the Translation Only, with somewhat less notes than in the Text and Translations section, which is intended for the casual reader who wants a reliable translation but is not interested in the technical matters concerning the original text itself. Here the sentence structure, which has many sub-clauses and the like in the Pāḷi, has been simplified to present a more natural flow in English.

Although the verses have been translated before,¹ this is the first time that the commentary has been brought over into English, and as far as I know the first time any section of the Apadāna commentary has been translated.²

1. Texts and Variations

The texts presented have been established through a comparison of the four standard editions, for the verses from the Apadāna:

BJT: Sri Lankan Edition, from Apadānapāḷi, Buddha Jayanti Tripiṭika Granthamālā, volume XXXVI. 1961, reprinted Colombo, 2005 with corrections.

¹ In Peter Masefield, *The Udāna Commentary* (PTS, 1994-5), pp. 633-635. Masefield also gives a summary of the commentarial stories in his notes, pp. 714-721.

² The material presented here has been discussed by Jonathon S. Walters, 'The Buddha's Bad Karma: A Problem in the History of Theravāda Buddhism' *Numen*, 37/1 (1990); 70-95; Sally Mellick Cutler: 'Still Suffering after All These Aeons,' in Peter Connelly and Sue Hamilton (eds), *Indian Insights: Buddhism, Brahmanism and Bhakti* (London 1997); and more recently by Naomi Appleton, as part of her book *Jātaka Stories in Theravāda Buddhism*, pp. 27-28, (Farnham, 2010).

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Thai: Thai edition, as found on Budsir for Windows CD-ROM (version 2.0, Bangkok, 1996).

ChS: Burmese edition, as found on the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana CD-ROM (version 3, Igaṭpuri, no date, but = 1999).

PTS: European edition, from The Apadāna, Part 1, edited by Mary E. Lilley, Pali Text Society, Oxford, 2000.

and for the commentary:

BJT: Sri Lankan Edition, from Visuddhajanavilāsiṇī, Part 1. Simon Hewavitarne Bequest Series, volume XXIX. date unknown.

Thai: Thai edition, as found on Budsir for Windows CD-ROM (version 2.0, Bangkok, 1996).

ChS: Burmese edition, as found on the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana CD-ROM (version 3, Igaṭpuri, no date, but = 1999).

PTS: European edition, from Visuddhajanavilāsiṇī nāma Apadānaṭṭhakathā, edited by C. E. Godakumbara, Pali Text Society, London, 1954.

As the notes to the edition clearly show there is a close relationship between ChS and Thai on the one hand; and SHB and PTS on the other. Indeed in each case the latter text appears to be taking the former as its model and only correcting it occasionally.

2. The Relationship between the Text and the Commentary

The Apadāna is organised into four sections: *Buddhāpadāna* (81³ verses); *Paccekabuddhāpadāna* (58 verses); *Therāpadāna* (6311 verses, 559 Theras) and *Therī-Apadāna* (1336 verses, 40 Therīs).⁴

The texts which are translated here describe the previous deeds of the Buddha which led in his last life to various kinds of suffering: from spending a long time in the wasteland of severe austerities; to receiving slander at various hands; to physical ailments of various kinds: being attacked and cut by rocks and scalpels; and getting headaches, backaches and dysentery.

We may have expected them to be presented therefore in the Traditions about the Buddha (*Buddhāpadāna*), which begins the book. Instead we find them tucked away in a very odd place: right in the middle of the verses which are otherwise concerned with the Elders, as No. 390 of that collection.

Why they are there is hard to explain, and it almost looks like someone was trying to hide them. There is a very short commentary on the

³ Verse numbers are as in the Sri Lankan edition.

⁴ Note that the last section has no commentary on it.

opening verses at that place,⁵ but the main commentary occurs at the end of the Traditions about the Buddha (*Buddhāpadāna-saṃvaṇṇanā*), which suggests that either the verses were once there, or the commentator wanted to draw attention to them.

The commentary on these verses is curious as it is unlike other sections of the same work which only provide a word commentary (*vaṇṇanā*). Here though, we get the stories explaining the deeds the Buddha-to-be had performed in the past,⁶ which were finding their fulfilment, even when he was Buddha.

Also it should be mentioned that the commentary doesn't take the verses in the order they appear in the text, but has them in roughly chronological order. To give an example, although the text treats the austerities that the Buddha-to-be underwent last, in the commentary it is dealt with first.⁷

Another problem is that there is some confusion in the commentary to verse two, as the story doesn't fit in with the verse it is supposed to

⁵ Not translated here as it is basically a word-commentary (*vaṇṇanā*), and is separated from the rest of the commentary.

⁶ As in, for instance, the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*.

⁷ The commentary treats them in the order: 12, 2, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

explain.⁸ The story at the beginning is about a scoundrel called Munāḷi, who slandered the Independent Buddha Surabhi. The verse, however, says that the Buddha-to-be had accused a disciple of the Buddha Sabbābhibhu called Nanda, and it was for this reason that the maiden Ciñcā slandered him. On the other hand the story of Munāḷi is told again, but in different words, to explain the next verse, where it does fit in with what he is trying to explain.

Another anomaly: the very next story tells of a time when the Bodhisatta was a teacher of five hundred students who slandered a seer. His students, following him, did the same. The verses, however, only mention that his disciples were slandered by Sundarī, and do not mention the Buddha's suffering.

Again, story no. 6 says that the Buddha's foot was cut as a result of throwing a splinter at an Independent Buddha; the verses, however, tell about the time the Buddha was attacked by bandits or archers sent by Devadatta, who were overcome by the Buddha's loving-kindness, and failed though to cause him any harm. The time that his foot was cut was when Devadatta threw a rock from on high, as reported in story no. 5.

It is worthy of notice that in the preface to his work, the unnamed commentator has this to say about the text he was working with:

⁸ Masefield noted this in his comments to the verses in the Udāna Commentary.

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Setting aside the ancient commentary in the Sinhala language
Which does not make things clear, longing for what is profitable,
Having forsaken reliance on that ancient commentary, therefore,
Which hinders (the true) meaning, (and) explaining the true meaning,
I will make a true and good explanation, which explains the meaning
(well).

We know precious little about the commentator, not even his name, or who instigated his work, which is normally mentioned, but a couple of things seem to indicate that he was unfamiliar with northern India: he has the King of Magadha say that he would be present at the double-miracle, but that event took place in another Kingdom, that of Kosala, and there is no indication that foreign Kings were present at the time;⁹ he also says that Anuruddha and the other Sakyans were near to Rājagaha when they went forth, but in fact they were at Anupiya in the Malla country when that happened about 10 days, or 250 km, walk away.

Given that he has declared his intention to put aside the Mahāvihāra commentary and write his own, which almost certainly would not have been possible if he had been resident there, this makes me believe that he was either from the Indian mainland, somewhere remote from the Middle Lands, perhaps in somewhere like Andhra; or that he was

⁹ See commentarial story no. 2 below; and for the next instance story no. 5.

connected with another fraternity, perhaps the Abhayagiri; and there are other considerations which might help substantiate this.

3. Relationship with Other Traditions

The compound used to describe the verses, *kammapilotika* (or in some editions *kammapiloti*) doesn't occur anywhere else in the Pāli texts except in connection with these verses; however, it does occur in Buddhist Sanskrit works¹⁰ like *Divyāvādāna*,¹¹ *Avadānaśataka* and *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*; and there are parallels to the text in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Anavatapta-gāthā*,¹² and in *Gandhārī*.¹³

What is more, one of the stories is told, in even more detail in the *Mahāvastu*.¹⁴ In the verses here it only says that through slandering a

¹⁰ There the compounds are *karmaplotika* and *karmaploti*.

¹¹ Cf. *Divyāvādāna* p. 150, where one of the 10 indispensable deeds (*daśāvaśyakaṇṭhyāni*) is listed as: *Anavatapte mahāsarasi śrāvakaiḥ sārđhaṃ pūrvikā karmaplotir vyākṛtā bhavati; explaining the connection with former deeds with his disciples near the great lake Anavatapta (Anotatta in Pāli).*

¹² See Bechert, *Die Anavatapta-gāthā und die Sthavira-gāthā*, Berlin 1961.

¹³ See http://gandhari.org/a_manuscript.php?catid=CKM0001.

¹⁴ See Senart's edition: pg. 34-45. I hope to translate this text at some point.

disciple of the Buddha Sabbābhibhu called Nanda, the (unnamed) Buddha-to-be transmigrated through hell for a long time, and in his last existence was slandered in turn by the maiden Cīncā; and as noted above the commentary doesn't provide an appropriate story here.

The Mahāvastu, however, has a long story about a monk called Abhiya who, being of a jealous nature, slandered the disciple called Nanda accusing him of sexual relations with a wife of a rich merchant. The interesting conclusion has Abhiya realising his fault, asking forgiveness from Nanda, and confessing his wrong-doing to the Buddha. He then makes an offering to the Buddha and makes an aspiration to become a Buddha himself, which is confirmed by Buddha Sarvābhibhū.

The idea of the connection of past deeds was also known to the Upāyakausalya also,¹⁵ where it is said the Buddha only told these stories as part of his skill-in-means, but not because he actually ever did anything wrong, which the text categorically denies he could have done, which represents another view on the subject altogether.

It is not within the scope of this introduction to examine all these continuities and discontinuities, but one thing is clear: the idea that the

¹⁵ But there the compound is *karmasantati*, and the list is not twelve items, but ten. Most of them are the same as is recorded here, however, so that it is clear we are dealing with the same tradition.

Buddha-to-be had done unwholesome deeds that came to fruition in the Buddha's lifetime was clearly known to the early traditions, even when it was rejected.

4. The Bodhisatta's Bad Deeds

That the Buddha-to-be should have done bad deeds should not surprise us, as it is recorded openly in the Jātaka stories that the Buddha-to-be many times did bad, unwholesome deeds. He is, of course, still pursuing the perfections, and has no claim to having completed them as yet, and so is bound to make misjudgements like everybody else.

For instance, in Jā 128 the Buddha-to-be is reborn as a rat and springs at a jackal's throat and kills him; in Jā 318 he is born in a robber's family and practices his craft; in Jā 431 he engages in sexual misconduct with a queen – interestingly in the same Jātaka, though, it denies that the Buddha-to-be can tell lies:

The Buddha-to-be on certain occasions may kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct and drink intoxicants; but he cannot, preferring to hurt the welfare (of others) by lying, speak falsely.

and the reason for this is clearly stated:

Even if one who has forsaken the truth has sat at the root of the Bodhi tree he is (still) unable to attain Awakening.

This statement is questionable, though, as it appears he was lying when he slandered the Independent Buddha Surabhi, the disciple of the Buddha Sabbābhibhu named Nanda and the seer (*rṣi*) Bhīma; and the repercussion was that in turn he was slandered by Ciñcā and Sundarī.

At another time he told the Buddha Phussa that he should eat barley, with the result that in his final life he had to do the same for three months during one Rains Retreat; he also questioned the possibility of the Buddha Kassapa being Awakened, and had to undergo six years of austerities on the wrong path.

In previous lives as here recorded he also killed his half-brother, threw a stone at an Independent Buddha, and struck another with an elephant; for which he had to suffer his brother-in-law Devadatta throwing stones at him, hiring assassins and driving the elephant Nālāgiri at him.

Because he laughed at some fish being killed he later got a headache (and the people who were doing the killing, being reborn in the Sakyan clan, were wiped out by King Viḍūḍabha); when he was a King he killed people with his sword, and because of that not only did a shard of stone cut his foot, but also the surgeon had to lance an abscess that

developed on it; and when he was a wrestler he broke an opponents back,¹⁶ and therefore had to suffer backache.

Each time he is said to have suffered greatly for a long time in various hells, and it is really only the residue of the deeds that came to fruition causing these problems for the Buddha in his last life.

Although the Buddha-to-be is said to have committed all these unwholesome acts, they are, of course, presented as examples of what *not* to do, as the repercussions are so dire, that even upon the attainment of Buddhahood they cannot be escaped, so that in the end the moral is clear. Towards the end of the commentary it is indeed stated emphatically:

The Buddha was surely not free from the connection with that deed.¹⁷

The Lord of the Three Worlds surely could not abandon the connection with that deed.

¹⁶ Though according to the commentary he fixed it again soon after, see story no 11 below.

¹⁷ Just before the verses in story No. 11 below; the next quote appears before the verses in story No. 12.

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And the moral is, of course, that neither can we, so we had better be careful about the deeds we choose to perform.

Why the Buddha Suffered

*The Traditions*¹⁸ *about the Buddha*

known as

The Connection with Previous Deeds

While on the delightful rocky plateau near Lake Anotatta,¹⁹
 Which shines with many jewels, and has many scents in the forest,
 The World-Leader, surrounded²⁰ by a great Community of Monks,
 While seated right there, explained his deeds which were done
 before saying:

¹⁸ I prefer this translation to other renderings such as *legends* (PED), *stories* (Rotman) or even *achievements* (SED), as it seems to me what we are dealing with, both with the material about the Worthy Disciples and the Buddha, are the traditions that were gradually being built up around these figures in the early Buddhist communities.

¹⁹ One of the seven great lakes in the Himālaya, now identified with Lake Manasarovar, near Mt. Kailash.

²⁰ Comm: *pareto parivuto*.

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Listen to me, O monks, explain the deed that was performed by me,²¹
And how the connection²² with that deed ripened even in
Buddhahood.²³

²¹ Thai adds the following verse: *Having seen one forest monk, I gave a rag-robe, the first wish for Buddhahood, was then (made) by me.*

²² *Pilotika* is given in PED as: *a small piece of cloth, a rag, a bandage*; SED: *ploti*, f. *thread, connection* (in *karma-p-*) Divyâv[adâna, 150]; in BHSD, Edgerton says that in *karmaploti*: it means *action (binding-)cord*, and also gives *connecting link, bond* as translations. Masefield, however, translates as *remnant*, and has a note which says: *The term seems to denote the minuscule remnant of an old garment and might therefore be taken as “karmic fluff” stemming from a deed whose major results have already been experienced.* It seems to me in the contexts I have been able to find in Pāli and Sanskritised Prākṛt either translation would fit, but I have preferred the former.

²³ Thai adds these two verses: *before when I was a cow-herder I drove cows to their pasture, having seen a cow drink from clear water I prevented him; through that deed and its result here in my last existence (when) thirsty and desiring the same I did not get (anything) to drink.*

[1]

In a previous life²⁴ I was a scoundrel known as Munāḷi,
I slandered the innocent Independent Buddha Surabhi;

Through that deed and through its result I long transmigrated through
Hell,
For many thousands of years I experienced unpleasant feeling.

Through the remainder of that deed, here in my last existence,
I received much slander myself, at the hands of Sundarikā.

[2]

There was a disciple of Buddha Sabbābhibhu named Nanda,
Through slandering him I transmigrated through Hell for a long time,
For ten thousand long years I transmigrated through Niraya hell,
When I received an existence as man, I received much slander,

Through the remainder of that deed the brahmin maiden named Ciñcā
Slandered me with lies at the head of an assembly of people.

²⁴ I present the verses first, without annotation or commentary as a translation of the latter follows.

[3]

As the brahmin Sutavā I was greatly honoured and worshipped,
I taught the mantras to my five hundred students in the Great Wood.

The seer Bhīma – who had five knowledges and great power – came
there,

And having seen him coming I slandered that innocent seer,

Thereupon I said to my pupils: This seer is a sensualist.

And all of the students rejoiced in that unwholesome speech of mine.

Thence all the students as they begged for alms from family to family,
Said to the great body of people: This seer is a sensualist;

Through that deed and through its result these monks numbering five
hundred

All received abundant slander at the hands of Sundarikā.

[4]

In the distant past I killed my half-brother²⁵ for the sake of wealth,
I threw him in an inaccessible mountain, and crushed him with a rock;
Through that deed and its result Devadatta threw a rock at me,
Which crushed the big toe on my foot with a shard which was made of
stone.

[5]

In the past, having become a boy, while playing on the highway,
Seeing an Independent Buddha on the road, I threw a stone;
Through that deed and through its result here in this my last existence
Devadatta tried to kill me by employing evil bandits.

[6]

Before I was a mahout. While a supreme Independent Sage
Was wandering for his almsfood, I struck him with my elephant;
Through that deed and its result, elephant Nālāgiri, swaying
Violently rushed at me in the city of Giribbaja.

²⁵ Having the same Father but different Mothers.

[7]

When I was a King going round on foot I killed men with my sword;
Through that deed and its result I suffered much in Niraya hell,
Through the remainder of that deed, at this time all the unbroken
Skin on my foot was cut – deeds are never destroyed without result.

[8]

Before I was a fisherman's son in a fisherman's village
Having seen fish being killed it produced a little happiness;
Through that deed and through its result I had a great pain in my head,
And all the Sakyans were killed when they were slain by Viḍūḍabha.²⁶

[9]

I blamed the teachings and disciples of Buddha Phussa saying:
“You should eat and enjoy barley, you should not enjoy this fine rice;”
Through that deed and its result for three months I ate only barley
When invited by the brahmin to dwell three months in Verañjā.

²⁶ There are some variations in the spelling of the name, but correct form of the name, which is said to have formed through a confusion anyway, is lost now.

[10]

Once while I was wrestling I badly injured another wrestler;
Through that deed and through its result I suffered a pain in my back.

[11]

At the time I was a physician I made a merchant's son purge;
Through that deed and through its result I had amoebic dysentery.

[12]

As Jotipāla I spoke to the Buddha Kassapa, saying:

“Where is this shavelings' Awakening? Awakening is supremely rare!”

Through that deed and its result I practiced many austerities
For six years at Uruvelā, and then attained to Awakening.

I did not attain the supreme Awakening through this path of pain,
I sought along the wrong path being obstructed by a past deed.

With merit and demerit destroyed, abstaining from all torment,
Griefless, without despair, I will be released, without pollutants.

So the Victor explained at the head of the Community of monks,
The one with all knowledge and strength, at the great Lake Anotatta.

Why the Buddha Suffered - 23

In this way, truly, the Fortunate One spoke about the former connection with his previous lives

in what is known as the Dhamma Instruction in the Traditions about the Buddha.

The Traditions about the Buddha

known as

The Connection with Previous Deeds is Complete

from The Explanation of the Traditions about the Buddha

...having finished the account of the wholesome traditions in the Traditions about the Buddha now we need to lay out the account of the unwholesome actions with an enquiry into his deeds.

Austerities²⁷ and slander, and once again more slander,
Slander, pierced by a rock, and the suffering through a splinter.

Nāḷāgiri, cut with a sword, headache, eating barley,
Backache, dysentery – these occurred through unwholesome deeds in the past.

[1. The Austerities]

Herein, in the first enquiry, called *austerities*, we hear about the reason for six years of austerities.

In the past, at the time of the Perfect Buddha Kassapa, the Buddha-to-be was a brahmin student named Jotipāla. Because of being born as a brahmin he was not satisfied with the Dispensation of that Fortunate

²⁷ These verses enumerate twelve ways in which the Buddha suffered, as a kind of tabulation of the stories to come.

One, with this outcome through the connection of deeds: having heard it said “The Gracious Kassapa”, he said: “Where is this shaveling ascetic's Awakening? Awakening is supremely rare!”

The outcome of that deed was that for countless hundreds of lives he underwent suffering in Naraka hell. After having received the prediction from that Fortunate One,²⁸ he wasted away in the transmigration of births because of that deed. But in the end he attained his existence as Vessantara,²⁹ and after falling away from that, he re-rose in the Tusita realm.

When the gods requested him to be reborn, after falling away from there, he arose in the Sakya family. He came to full maturity of knowledge, gave up the sovereignty over the whole of the Rose-Apple Island, cut his top-knot with a well-sharpened sword on the bank of the river Anoma, which was then taken by a Brahmā god using his psychic power until the end of the aeon, and he took the requisites placed in the lotus calyx and went forth.

²⁸ The Buddha-to-be as Jotipāla had later ordained under the Buddha Kassapa, who then confirmed that he would become a Buddha himself at a later date.

²⁹ His last earthly existence before the birth as Siddhattha, for which see the final Jātaka (Jā. 547).

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Being unripe as yet for insight and knowledge and wisdom because of not knowing what is the path and what is not the path to Buddhahood, because of eating only one type of food, one lump of food, from one person only, on one path only, at one sitting only,³⁰ for six years in the Uruvelā country his body, with its bones, skin, sinews and the rest, being without flesh and blood, became like a dead person. His striving should be understood as it is recorded in the Discourse on the Great Traditions,³¹ and so with great energy he performed his austerities.

³⁰ These are all different types of austerities: taking only one type of food, like beans; or only one lump of food, like one bean; or from only one person, no matter how little they give; or from only one path, instead of going along as many as needed; or eating only at one sitting, not taking anymore for the day after rising from the seat, etc.

³¹ DN 14, which hardly touches on the subject of the striving, but with the process of Awakening; ChS, Thai: *Padhānasutte*, and identifies it with Suttanipāta, 3.2, but that also deals not so much with the striving as with the fight with Māra. Perhaps a better reference would have been to MN 26, Ariyapariyesanasuttam, which does deal in detail with the striving.

Why the Buddha Suffered - 27

After realising that austerity is not the Path to Complete Awakening, and partaking of fine food in the villages, towns and capital cities,³² he satisfied his faculties and the thirty-two signs of the Great Man appeared, and after approaching the area near the Bodhi Tree, and defeating the five Māras,³³ he became the Buddha.

As Jotipāla I spoke to the Buddha Kassapa, saying:

“Where is this shavelings' Awakening? Awakening is supremely rare!”

Through that deed and its result I practiced many austerities
For six years at Uruvelā, and then attained to Awakening.

I did not attain the supreme Awakening through this path of pain,
I sought along the wrong path being obstructed by a past deed.

With merit and demerit destroyed, abstaining from all torment,
Griefless, without despair, I will be released, without pollutants.

³² However, in the tradition it is only said that he partook of the food provided by Sujāta, and there is no mention of his traveling around the country, as this implies, partaking of fine food.

³³ Māra as a god (*devaputtamāra*); Māra as defilements (*kilesammāra*); Māra as the constituent parts (*khandhamāra*); Māra as (wholesome and unwholesome) deeds (*kammamāra*); and Māra as death (*maccumāra*).

[2. Slander]

In the second enquiry, called *slander*, we hear about great lies and censure.

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be was born into a low-caste³⁴ family and dwelt as an unknown and failed scoundrel called Munāḷi. Then a powerful and majestic Independent Buddha called Surabhi arrived near to his place on some business or other. After seeing him, he slandered him, saying: “This ascetic is unvirtuous and wicked!”³⁵

Through that unwholesome deed he underwent suffering in the Naraka hell and so on for countless thousands of years. In his last state of existence, when the sectarians at the very beginning had become famous

³⁴ *Sudda* signifies the fourth and lowest class in the Brahminical system, with Vassa, Brahmin and Khattiya above them. However, they are within the class system, not outside it, like the outcastes.

³⁵ There is some confusion in the commentary here, as this story doesn't fit in with the verse it purportedly explains. The verse says that the Buddha-to-be had accused a disciple of the Buddha Sabbāhibhu called Nanda. On the other hand this story of Munāḷi is told again later in different words to explain the next verse.

– during the time of the Fortunate One's residence in the Tusita³⁶ realm
– they went round and deceived the whole people by teaching the sixty-two views.

Descending from the Tusita city and being reborn in the Royal Sakyan family he by and by became the Buddha. The sectarians, like glow-worms when the sun arises, lost their gains and respect and they went round bound by hatred towards the Fortunate One.

At that time a merchant of Rājagaha³⁷ bound a net across the Ganges and while sporting saw a stick of red sandalwood and thought: “In our house there is plenty of sandalwood.” So after preparing a lathe and having a bowl prepared by the wood-turners he hung it from a series of bamboo sticks, had the drum beaten and said: “To those who come and take this bowl out of the sky with their psychic power I will provide a constant supply of food.”

Then the sectarians, thought: “We are lost now, we are lost now!” but the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta³⁸ spoke like this to his assembly, saying: “After approaching the bamboo, I will make as though I will jump into the sky,

³⁶ The word means: *Satisfied*.

³⁷ The Canonical story is told in Vinaya Cullavagga 5.

³⁸ The founder of the Jainas.

and you must say: ‘Do not show your psychic power for the sake of this miserable bowl,’ and after grabbing my body, you must prevent me from jumping”, and after approaching that place they did just that.³⁹

Then Piṇḍolabhāradvāja and Moggallāna, having ascended to the top of a mountain three leagues in extent, while wrapping their robes around to go on alms round, heard that uproar. At that Moggallāna said this to Piṇḍolabhāradvāja: “Go through the sky and take the bowl.” But he said: “Venerable Sir, you were placed in first position for one endowed with psychic power by the Fortunate One, surely you should take it.”

But Moggallāna gave the order: “You must take it.” So standing there Piṇḍolabhāradvāja lifted that three-league stone mountain on his foot and covered the whole of the Rājagaha town like a bowl with its lid. Then the town-dwellers seeing the Elder wielding that crystal mountain like a thread shouted out: “Venerable Bhāradvāja, you must save us,” and shook fearfully from head to foot.

Then the Elder put that mountain down from the place he was standing and went through the air with his psychic power and grabbed the bowl – and the town-dwellers made a great uproar.

³⁹ But the merchant was not convinced and didn't give him the bowl.

The Fortunate One, sitting in the Bamboo Monastery, having heard that sound, asked Ānanda: “What sound is this?” Ānanda answered: “Venerable Sir, Bhāradvāja has grabbed the bowl and the satisfied town-dwellers have made a sound of acclamation.”

Then the Fortunate One, who was free of the censure of others, had that bowl brought, broken and powdered, and had it given to the monks. After it was given he laid down a training rule, saying: “Monks, one should not perform miracles by psychic power, for he who does perform one, there is an offence of wrong-doing.”⁴⁰

Because of that the sectarians said: “It seems that a training rule has been laid down for his disciples by the ascetic Gotama that they will not transgress even for the sake of life, but now we will perform a miracle of psychic power,” and there and then they came together and made a great uproar.

Then King Bimbisāra, after hearing that, approaching and worshipping the Fortunate One, and sitting on one side, said this to the Fortunate One: “The sectarians, Venerable Sir, proclaim: ‘We will perform a miracle of psychic power.’”

⁴⁰ The rule actually reads: *one should not show a miracle of psychic power of a state beyond (ordinary) human beings, monks, to householders, (for) he who does show (one), there is an offence of wrong-doing.*

“I also, Great King, will perform one.”

“But, Venerable Sir, was not a training rule laid down for his disciples by the Fortunate One?”

“Great King, I will question you: for those eating mango fruits and so on in your garden you apply a rule, saying ‘There is so much punishment,’ but is that applied if you have collected them?”

“There is no punishment for me, Venerable Sir.”

“Even so, Great King, the training rule that was laid down is not for me.”

“Where, Venerable Sir, will the miracle be?”

“Near to Sāvattthī, Great King, at the root of Gaṇḍa's mango tree.”

“Very good, Venerable Sir, we will see it.”⁴¹

⁴¹ However, there is no sign later of King Bimbisāra of Magadha being in Sāvattthī, the capital of the Kingdom of Kosala, at the time of the miracle, and this is probably another sign of the commentator's ignorance of the ancient Indian kingdoms.

Because of that the sectarians, who had heard: “The miracle, it seems, will be at the root of Gaṇḍa's mango tree,” had the mango trees in every part of the town cut down.

The citizens set up terraced stands,⁴² scaffolding and so on along the great courtyards, and all of those who dwell in the Rose-Apple Island came together and they stood spread out for twelve leagues in the easterly direction, and assembled as suitable in the other directions.

When the Āsāḷha Full Moon day arrived, the Fortunate One, after completing his duties in the morning, approached that place and sat down. At that time the gardener, Gaṇḍa by name, after seeing a fully ripe mango fruit in a red ants' nest, thought: “If I give this to the King I will receive the value in money, but if I offer it to the Fortunate One I will be successful in this world and the next!” So he offered it to the Fortunate One.

After accepting it the Fortunate One ordered the Elder Ānanda: “Have this fruit crushed and please give me a drink.” And so the Elder did. After drinking the mango juice and giving the mango seed to the gardener, he said: “Plant this.” He removed the sand and planted it and the Elder Ānanda sprinkled it with his water-jug. At that time a mango

⁴² PED, *mañcātimañcaṃ* (s.v. *mañca*) says: *bed upon bed, i. e. beds placed on top of each other serving as grand stands at a fair or festival.*

sprout arose and as the multitude was watching it was seen to be heavy with branches, aerial-roots, flowers, fruits and fresh leaves. They ate the mango fruits which had fallen but even all those who dwelt in the Rose-Apple Island were unable to finish them all off.

Then the Fortunate One made a Jewelled Walk from the easterly universe to the westerly universe, and on the top of Mount Meru in this universe countless assemblies cried out their Lion's Roar, and all is as it is recorded in the Commentary on the Dhammapada.⁴³ He performed a great miracle of psychic power,⁴⁴ crushed the sectarians, and converted them.

At the end of the miracle, because it was the practice of Buddhas in former times, he went to the realm of the Thirty-Three and undertook the Rains Retreat there, and taught the Abstract Teaching continually for three months helping countless gods with his former Mother at their head attain the Path of Stream-Entry and so on.

⁴³ The reference is to the commentary on verse 176, which tells this story and the story of Ciñcā which follows.

⁴⁴ This was the so-called Double-Miracle (*Yamakapaṭihāra*), in which he produced water and fire from his body for a period of sixteen days, meanwhile also preaching the Dhamma.

On completion of the Rains Retreat he descended from the gods, and surrounded by crowds of gods and deities he descended to the gate of the city of Saṅkassa seeking the welfare of the world. Then the Fortunate One's gains and respect flowed in from all over the Rose-Apple Island, like the five great rivers.⁴⁵

However, the sectarians, having lost their gains and respect, pained and depressed, sat down with hunched shoulders and fallen faces. Then the female lay follower, the maiden known as Ciñcā seeing them sitting there like that asked: “Venerable Sirs, why are you sitting there pained and depressed?”

“But, Sister, are you not bothered?”

“Why, venerable Sirs?”

“Sister, from the time the ascetic Gotama arose our gains and respect have been destroyed, and the town-dwellers have no more regard for us.”

“What can I do about this?”

“It behoves you to bring the ascetic Gotama into disrepute.”

⁴⁵ The Gaṅgā, the Yamunā, the Aciravatī, the Sarabhū, and the Mahī (see <http://goo.gl/o40B0> for a map).

Saying: “That is my duty,” she endeavoured therein, and after going to the Jeta's Wood monastery at the wrong time⁴⁶ she stayed at the nearby sectarians' nunnery. But in the morning, when the town-dwellers had taken incense and so on, as they were going along for the purpose of worshipping the Fortunate One, she made like she was departing from Jeta's Wood.

On being asked: “Where did you sleep?”⁴⁷ she said to them: “What is my sleeping place to you?” and departed. But by and by when she was asked while leaving she said: “Having slept alone with the ascetic Gotama in the Fragrant Cottage, I am departing.” The foolish worldly folk believed it, but the wise – Stream-Enterers and so forth – did not believe it.

One day, after binding a circle of wood to her stomach, putting on a scarlet cloth, and going with the assembly together with the King to listen to the Teaching, while sitting there she said this to the Fortunate One: “Dear ascetic, you teach the Doctrine, why do you not seek garlic, chilli and so on for me on account of your son who is in my womb?”

“Whether that is true or false, Sister, you know, and so do I.”

⁴⁶ Technically it means after noon and before dawn, but in this context probably means in the evening.

⁴⁷ Lit: *where did you lie?*

She said: “The two of us know the truth about our sexual association, but no one else knows.”

At that moment Sakka's stone throne was seen to radiate heat. Sakka considered and after understanding the reason gave an order to two of the gods: “Make for one of yourselves the form of a mouse and cut through the bonds holding her circle of wood, and the other should produce a whirlwind and lift up her dress.” They went and did just that.

The circle of wood while falling cut off her toes. All the worldlings in the Doctrinal Hall, having gathered round, said: “Hey, you wicked villain, to such a one as the Lord of the Three Worlds you have made such a slanderous remark!” and after rising up each of them gave her a blow with their fists, and drove her from the hall, and as she passed out of sight the earth opened up.⁴⁸

At that moment the flames of Avīci hell rose up and clothed with the scarlet blanket given by her family she fell into Avīci.

And the Fortunate One's gains and respect greatly increased.

Therefore it is said:

⁴⁸ Lit: *presented an opening*.

There was a disciple of Buddha⁴⁹ Sabbābhibhu named Nanda,
Through slandering him I transmigrated through Hell for a long
time,⁵⁰

For ten thousand long years I transmigrated through Niraya hell,
When I received an existence as man, I received much slander,

Through the remainder of that deed the brahmin maiden named
Ciñcā

Slandered me with lies at the head of an assembly of people.

[3. Slander]

In the third enquiry, called *slander*, we hear about great lies and abuse.

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be, in a little known life,⁵¹ was reborn and became a scoundrel called Munāḷi, and through the power of

⁴⁹ Identified as a Paccekabuddha in DPPN, though neither the text nor the commentary says as much; he is not mentioned elsewhere.

⁵⁰ Cf. the story of the Bodhisattva in his life as Abhiya in Mahāvastu, p. 35 ff., who is jealous by nature and slanders a disciple of the Buddha Sarvābhibhū named Nanda. There it is related he realises his mistake and apologises both to the Buddha and his disciple, and aspires to Buddhahood, which is then confirmed.

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association with bad people abused the Independent Buddha called Surabhi, saying: “This monk is unvirtuous and wicked.”

Through that unwholesome verbal deed he boiled in the Niraya hell for many thousands of years, and in this his last state, through being successful in the ten perfections, he became the Buddha, and attained the highest gains and fame.

Again the sectarians became insolent saying: “Now what will bring this ascetic Gotama to infamy?” and they sat there pained and depressed.

Then a certain wanderer called Sundarī approached, worshipped them and stood there, but seeing them silent and not speaking anything, she questioned them, saying: “What is my fault?”

“We are being harassed by that ascetic Gotama and you are making no effort, that is your fault.”

“What should I do in this matter?”

“Will you be able to bring the ascetic Gotama into disrepute?”

⁵¹ We could also translate as: *in an (otherwise) unknown life*; probably mentioned as such because this life-story is not recorded in the Jātakas or elsewhere.

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She said: “I am able, noble ones”, and it is recorded that she was frequently seen in the vicinity and abused and censured the Buddha by saying: “After sleeping alone with the ascetic Gotama in the Fragrant Cottage I am leaving.”

And also the sectarians said: “Look, dear friends, at the ascetic Gotama's deed!” and abused and censured him.

And so this was said:

In a previous life I was a scoundrel known as Munāli,
I slandered the innocent Independent Buddha Surabhi;

Through that deed and through its result I long transmigrated
through Hell,

For many thousands of years I experienced unpleasant feelings.

Through the remainder of that deed, here in my last existence,
I received much slander myself, at the hands of Sundarikā.⁵²

⁵² See Udāna 4-8 for the Canonical story. We might translate Sundarikā as Little Sundarī, taking *-ikā* as diminutive, but it is fairly common in verse texts to add the affix to names to meet the requirements of the metre, with no change in meaning or identification intended.

[4. Slander]

In the fourth enquiry, called *slander*, we hear about especially great abuse and censuring.

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be was reborn in a Brahminical family, and was very learned, much respected and worshipped.⁵³

⁵³ His name at that time was Sutavā, as is recorded in the verses below.

Having gone forth in the recluses' going-forth, while living on forest roots and fruits in the Himālaya,⁵⁴ he spent his time teaching the mantras⁵⁵ to many students.

One recluse,⁵⁶ who had the five deep knowledges and the eight attainments came to stay near him. Having seen him, and being jealous by nature, he slandered that innocent seer saying: “This seer is a deceitful sensualist,” and his pupils also said: “This seer is surely immoral.” They therefore abused and censured him.

Through that unwholesome deed and its result, after undergoing suffering in Niraya hell for many thousands of years, and becoming a Buddha in this his last state, and attaining the highest gains and fame, he became famous and was like the full moon in the sky.

Right there and then the dissatisfied sectarians made Sundarī slander him again, summoning and bribing some drunken scoundrels, and gave

⁵⁴ *Himavanta*; *having snow*, it is another name for the *Himālaya*, *the place of snow*. In the verses the place is called the Great Wood, but there are several woods so named in the texts, perhaps it was the Wood near to Kapilavatthu, which was on the edge of the Himālayas.

⁵⁵ The brahminical verses collected in the Vedas.

⁵⁶ Named Bhīma below.

the order saying: “After murdering Sundarī, throw her by the rubbish tip near the entrance to Jeta's Wood.” And that they did.

Afterwards the sectarians informed the King saying: “We cannot find⁵⁷ Sundarī.” The King said: “Search for her.” After retrieving her from the place where she was felled, bringing the bier and showing the King, they said: “Look, dear Sir, at what the ascetic Gotama's disciples have done!”

Then they went round shouting out dispraise about the Fortunate One and his Community of monks in the whole town and placed Sundarī on a platform in the charnel ground.⁵⁸ The King gave the order saying: “Seek for Sundarī's murderer!”

Then after the scoundrels had drunk liquor, they made a commotion and accused each other, saying: “You murdered Sundarī, you murdered her!” The King's men, after arresting the scoundrels, brought⁵⁹ them to the King, and he said: “Did you murder Sundarī?”

“Yes, your majesty.”

⁵⁷ Lit: *Do not see*.

⁵⁸ The disposal of the body would be taken care of by birds and animals, as in the so-called ‘sky-burials’ of the Tibetans and the Parsees.

⁵⁹ Lit: *showed*.

“Who gave the order?”

“The sectarians, your majesty.”

The King had the sectarians brought and bound and said: “Go and shout it out, saying: ‘In order to bring the Buddha into disrepute we ourselves had Sundarī murdered, the Fortunate One and his disciples didn't do it.’” And that they did.

All the town-dwellers regained confidence. The King executed the sectarians and the scoundrels and had their bodies thrown aside.

Then the Fortunate One's gains and respect grew enormously.

Therefore it is said:

As the brahmin Sutavā I was greatly respected and worshipped,
I taught the mantras to my five hundred students in the Great Wood.

The seer Bhīma – who had five knowledges and great power – came
there,

And having seen him coming, I slandered that innocent seer,

Thereupon I said to my pupils: This seer is a sensualist.⁶⁰

And all of the students rejoiced in that unwholesome speech of mine.

⁶⁰ Lit: *one who enjoys sense pleasures.*

Thence all the students as they begged for alms from family to family,

Said to the great body of people: This seer is a sensualist;

Through that deed and through its result these monks numbering five hundred

All received abundant slander at the hands of Sundarikā.

[5. Pierced by a Rock]

In the fifth enquiry, called *pierced by a rock*, we hear about how being angry⁶¹ Devadatta threw a rock.

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be was the youngest brother of the children of one Father.⁶² When the Father passed away,⁶³ making a commotion on account of the servants the brothers became opposed to each other. The Buddha-to-be, who was himself endowed with great strength, after overcoming his younger brother, threw a rock and killed him.

⁶¹ Mahāniddeśa-aṭṭhakathā: *āhatacittatan-ti kodhena pahatacittabhāvaṃ; āhatacittataṃ means being in a state overcome by anger.*

⁶² This implies that the Father had children by more than one wife.

⁶³ Lit: *at the end of the Father.*

Through that deed and its result, after undergoing suffering in the Naraka hell and so on for countless thousands of years, he became a Buddha in this his last state of existence.

Formerly Devadatta, prince Rāhula's uncle,⁶⁴ was a merchant together with the Buddha-to-be in the time of the Seri merchant story.⁶⁵ Having reached the Paṭṭana village⁶⁶ they said: “You take one street, and I will take one street,” and they entered by two different ways.

In the street by which Devadatta entered there were two people: an elderly merchant's wife and her grand-daughter. They had a large golden plate that had become stained that was set aside inside an earthenware vessel, and not knowing it was a golden plate, she said: “Take this plate, and give a trinket for my grand-daughter.”

⁶⁴ He was Prince Siddhattha's wife's brother; he was also the Buddha's cousin, a Father's Brother's son.

⁶⁵ The reference is to the famous Serivāṇijāṭaka, Jā 3, which was the occasion for Devadatta to form an animosity for the Buddha-to-be that was to last up and till his last life. What follows is based on that story.

⁶⁶ Not listed in DPPN, but in the Jātaka they are said to have been in the Andha country (modern-day Andhra Pradesh).

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Having taken it and scratched it with a needle he knew it was a golden plate. Thinking: “I will take it later after giving her very little”, he went away.

Then after seeing the Buddha-to-be approach her door, summoning and making him sit down, and giving him the plate, she said: “Take this and give a trinket to my grand-daughter from your basket.”

The Buddha-to-be, after taking it and knowing it to be a golden plate understood she is deceived about it, and from his purse he set aside eight pennies, and gave the rest of his goods,⁶⁷ and also gave a trinket from his basket to the young girl as an ornament for her hands, and then he went away.

The first merchant having returned asked her for the plate, but she said: “Son, I cannot give it, having given this and that to my child he took it and went away.” Having heard that, like someone with a broken heart, he ran along after him. The Buddha-to-be had already got onto a boat. Saying: “Stop, don't go, don't go!”⁶⁸ he made a wish: “May I be able to destroy him in whatever state he re-arises!”

⁶⁷ He set aside eight pennies for his boat ride, and gave the rest of his money and goods.

⁶⁸ But the Buddha-to-be had already gone.

Because of that wish they harrassed one another in countless hundreds of thousands of lives. Arising in the Sakya family in this existence the Fortunate One by and by attained omniscience. While living near Rājagaha⁶⁹ Devadatta went forth in the presence of the Fortunate One together with Anuruddha and so on, and attained the absorptions. Being famous he begged the Fortunate One for a boon, saying: “Venerable Sir, let the whole of the Community of monks undertake the thirteen austerities,⁷⁰ let the whole of my⁷¹ Community of monks bear them.”

But the Fortunate One didn't give permission.

⁶⁹ The Sakyans actually went forth in Anupiya in the Malla state (see Vinaya Cullavagga VII for the story), only after that did they go to Rājagaha, around 250 kilometres away.

⁷⁰ From the Vinaya account (Vinaya Cullavagga, VII, near the end of the second bhāṇavāra) it appears that he did not ask the Buddha for the monks to undertake the thirteen austerities, but to abide by five rules: they should dwell all their lives in the forest, live entirely on alms obtained by begging, wear only robes made of discarded rags, dwell at the foot of a tree and abstain completely from fish and flesh (this last one is not part of the thirteen austerities). The Buddha refused to make these compulsory.

⁷¹ Devadatta seems already to be claiming leadership of the Community.

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Devadatta was overcome⁷² with hatred and lost the absorptions. Desiring to murder the Fortunate One, one day while the Fortunate One was standing at the foot of Mt. Vebhāra,⁷³ he threw a rock at him while standing on the top of the mountain.

Through the power of the Fortunate One another mountain⁷⁴ caught it as it fell, but a splinter broke off and struck him giving a blow to the Fortunate One's toes.

Therefore it is said:

In the distant past I killed my half-brother⁷⁵ for the sake of wealth,
I threw him in an inaccessible mountain, and crushed him with a
rock;

Through that deed and its result Devadatta threw a rock at me,
Which crushed the big toe on my foot with a shard which was made
of stone.

⁷² Lit: *bound with*.

⁷³ According to other accounts he was on the slopes of Vulture's Peak (Gijjhakūta).

⁷⁴ Which miraculously sprang up.

⁷⁵ In Pāḷi it is more specific: one with a different Mother but the same Father.

[6. Pierced by a Splinter]

In the sixth enquiry, called *pierced by a splinter*, we hear about how he was struck by a splinter.

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be was reborn in a certain family, and while playing on the main street during his childhood he saw an Independent Buddha walking along that street for alms and thought: “Where is this little shaveling ascetic going?” and taking a splinter of stone, he threw it at his toes. After cutting the skin on the toes blood flowed forth.

Through that wicked deed, after undergoing great suffering in Niraya hell for countless thousands of years, he became a Buddha. Because of the connection with that deed he was struck with a stone splinter on his toes and blood flowed forth.⁷⁶

Therefore it is said:

⁷⁶ Lit: *he suffered the arising of blood*. The story again doesn't fit the verse, which tells that the Buddha was attacked by archers sent to kill him; they did not, however, manage to hurt him, and certainly did not cut his foot which belongs to the rock throwing incident, reported in the previous story.

Having become a boy in the past, while playing on the highway,
Seeing an Independent Buddha on the road, I threw a stone;

Through that deed and through its result here in this my last
existence

Devadatta tried to kill me by employing evil bandits.⁷⁷

[7. The Elephant Nālāgiri]

In the seventh enquiry, called *Nālāgiri*, we hear about how the elephant Dhanapālaka was sent in order to kill the Buddha.

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be, who was an elephant's groom, rose onto an elephant, and seeing an Independent Buddha walking on the Highway, said: “Where is this shaveling going?” and being angry and stubborn he assaulted him with his elephant.

Having undergone suffering in the lower realms for countless thousands of years through that deed, he became a Buddha in his last state of existence.

⁷⁷ Actually archers provided by King Ajātasattu. This last verse reads differently in SHB and PTS: *through that deed and its result, when I had become a Buddha, Devadatta who was angry threw a rock (at me) in that place.*

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After Devadatta had become friends with King Ajātasattu, he said: “Great King, after killing your Father you will become King, and after murdering the Buddha, I will be the Buddha!”

After having this thought, one day, with the King's permission he went to the elephant stall and gave this order to the elephant groom: “Tomorrow, make Nāḷāgiri drink sixteen pots of liquor and send him out when the Fortunate One is walking for alms!”

There was a great uproar in the whole town, and they said: “We will see a battle between the noble⁷⁸ Buddha and the noble elephant!” and having set up terraced stands on both sides along the royal highway, they assembled in the morning.

The Fortunate One, after tending to his bodily needs, entered Rājagaha for alms surrounded by the Community of monks.

At that time in accordance with the order that had been given Nāḷāgiri was released. He came making all scatter at the crossroads and so on.

⁷⁸ *Nāga* is a word with many meanings, including nobility, strength and anything that possesses these qualities like a cobra, an elephant, a noble person – the Buddha is many times referred to as a *nāga* in the early texts.

Then a certain girl being seized with fear ran from street to street, and the elephant,⁷⁹ having seen that girl, pursued her.

The Fortunate One said: “Nāḷāgiri you were not sent to kill her, come here!” Having heard that sound, he ran right at the Fortunate One. The Fortunate One suffused beings without end in the measureless universe with loving-kindness and he also suffused Nāḷāgiri. Being suffused with loving-kindness by the Fortunate One he lost his fear and threw himself at the feet⁸⁰ of the Fortunate One. The Fortunate One placed his hand on his head.

Then the gods and deities, their minds marvelling and wondering, worshipped him with fragrant powder and so on. The whole city became filled with a heap of wealth knee-deep. The King had the drums beaten and said: “The wealth up to the West gate is for the town-dwellers, the wealth up to the East gate is for the King's treasury!” And they all did that.

Then Nāḷāgiri gained the name Dhanapāla.⁸¹ And the Fortunate One returned to the Bamboo Monastery.

⁷⁹ A regular word for an *elephant*, it literally means, *one with a hand(-like trunk)*.

⁸⁰ Lit: *the root of the feet*, which is unidiomatic in English.

⁸¹ Meaning *Protector of the Wealth*.

Therefore it is said:

Before I was a mahout. While a supreme Independent Sage
Was wandering for his almsfood, I struck him with my elephant;
Through that deed and its result, elephant Nāḷāgiri swaying
Violently rushed at me in the city of Giribbaja.⁸²

[8. Cut with a Knife]

In the eighth enquiry, called *cut with a knife*, we hear about how an abscess was lanced with a knife, how with a knife, or a scalpel, it was cut.

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be was a King in a border country. Through association with bad people in the border country, and because of living with a violent scoundrel, one day while walking through the town on foot with a sword in his hand he went around cutting guiltless people down with the sword.

Through that unwholesome deed and its result, after boiling in Niraya hell for many thousands of years, and undergoing suffering in the animal world and so on, through the remainder of the result of that deed, after becoming the Buddha in his last state of existence, it is

⁸² Another name for Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha.

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recorded that while he was below⁸³ Devadatta struck him a blow with a stone splinter he had thrown and an abscess arose on his foot. Jīvaka⁸⁴ lanced that abscess with his mind full of loving-kindness.

Through that deed of causing blood to flow in a Buddha there was a result immediately after this life for Devadatta,⁸⁵ whose mind was full of hate; through lancing that abscess there was great merit for Jīvaka, whose mind was full of loving-kindness.⁸⁶

Therefore it is said:

⁸³ Walking on the slopes of Gijjhakūta near Rājagaha.

⁸⁴ The Buddha was carried in great pain to the Mango Wood where Jīvaka Komārabhacca, who acted as physician for the Buddha and for the monks, treated him.

⁸⁵ *Anantarika*, means a deed that causes a result that follows immediately and irrecoverably after this life (not immediately after the deed itself), and this happened before some of the other attacks Devadatta made on the Buddha. Eventually the ground opened and Devadatta fell into the Avīci (unmitigated) hell, where, it is said, he will suffer for one hundred thousand kappas, before being reborn and becoming an Independent Buddha called Atthissara.

⁸⁶ There is an interesting emphasis on the state of mind in this sentence. Devadatta and Jīvaka both did the same thing: they cut the Buddha's foot, but one acted out of hatred and the other out of loving-kindness, and so the result was different.

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When I was a King going round on foot I killed men with my sword;
Through that deed and its result I suffered much in Niraya hell,

Through the remainder of that deed, at this time all the unbroken
Skin on my foot was cut – deeds are never destroyed without
result.⁸⁷

[9. A Headache]

In the ninth enquiry, called *a headache*, we hear about how he had a pain in the head, or painful feeling in the head.

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be was reborn as a fisherman in a fisherman's village. One day, together with the fishermen he went to the place where they murder fish, and seeing fish being murdered, happiness arose right there, and also right there and then happiness arose for those he was with.

Through that unwholesome deed, after undergoing suffering in the four lower realms, in this his last state of existence, together with those men he was born in the Royal Sakya family, and by and by having attained to Buddhahood he suffered from pain in the head.

⁸⁷ Not destroyed without producing results first, is what is meant.

And about the Sakyan Royalty and their fate it is recorded in the discussion in the commentary to the Dhammapada: in the battle with Viḍūḍabha they all came to destruction.⁸⁸

Therefore it is said:

Before I was a fisherman's son in a fisherman's village,
Having seen fish being killed it produced a little happiness;

Through that deed and through its result I had a great pain in my
head,

And all the Sakyans were killed when they were slain by Viḍūḍabha.

[10. Eating Barley]

In the tenth enquiry, called *eating barley*, we hear about eating husked barley.⁸⁹

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be was reborn in a certain family, and because of his high birth and being blinded by foolishness, having seen the disciples of the Fortunate One Phussa enjoying sweet drinks

⁸⁸ In the commentary to verse 47, entitled The Story of Viḍūḍabha (*Viḍūḍabhavatthu*).

⁸⁹ *Tañḍula* means *husked rice* normally, but in the story there is no mention of rice being served with the barley, so I take it it must mean *husked barley*.

and food and the finest rice and so on, he scolded them saying: “Hey, you shaveling ascetics should eat barley, you shouldn't enjoy the finest rice!”

Through that unwholesome deed and its result, after undergoing suffering in the four lower realms for countless thousands of years, in this his last state of existence, he by and by attained Buddhahood. Having sympathy for the world he walked in the villages, towns and royal cities, and at one time, while in the vicinity of the brahminical village of Verañjā, he arrived at the root of a Margosa tree endowed with spreading⁹⁰ branches.

A Verañjā brahmin,⁹¹ having approached the Fortunate One, being unable to overcome the Fortunate One in any way became a Stream-Enterer and invited him saying: “Venerable Sir, please undertake to spend the Rains Retreat here.”

⁹⁰ See *Viṭapa* in SED for this meaning, which goes unnoticed in PED.

⁹¹ The whole story of the Buddha's residence in Verañjā, the famine that prevailed at that time and the conversations he had with the Verañjā brahmin is related at the very beginning of the Vinayapiṭaka. Suttavibhaṅga, 1 ff. The discussion with the brāhmin in which the Buddha counters his accusations, and eventually teaches him the Four Noble Truths, can be found there and also in the Verañjasutta of Aṅguttaranikāya: AN Bk. 8, Ch. 2, Su. 1.

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The Fortunate One consented by remaining silent.

Then, beginning on the following day, the Wicked Māra possessed the whole of those dwelling in the brahmin village of Verañjā. And when the Fortunate One entered the village for alms because of being possessed by Māra they did not give even one spoon of almsfood. The Fortunate One, surrounded by the Community of monks, returned with an empty bowl.

A horse merchant arrived at the very place where they resided and after giving a gift of almsfood that day, and inviting the Fortunate One and his five hundred monks thenceforth, and dividing a share of food from the five-hundred horses, he crushed the barley, and dropped it into the monks' bowls.

All the well-born gods from the whole of the ten-thousand universes dropped in godly nutrients so that it was like freshly cooked milk-rice. The Fortunate One partook of the food and for three months thereafter he partook of barley.

At the end of three months, being no longer possessed by Māra, on the Invitation Day, the Verañjā brahmin, after remembering his duties, became very anxious and gave a great gift of almsfood to the Community of monks with the Buddha at its head, and worshipping, begged for forgiveness.

Therefore it is said:

I blamed the teachings and disciples of Buddha Phussa saying:
“You should eat and enjoy barley, you should not enjoy this fine
rice;”

Through that deed and its result for three months I ate only barley
When invited by the brahmin to dwell three months in Verañjā.

[11. Backache]

In the eleventh enquiry, called *backache*, we hear how he had pain in
the back.

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be was reborn in a householder's
family and although he was somewhat short by nature he was endowed
with great strength. At that time there was one wrestling-contest
champion in the villages, towns and royal cities in the whole of the
Rose-Apple Island who, after throwing men in a wrestling contest,
achieved success, and by and by having arrived at the Buddha-to-be's
residential town, and throwing people there, he got ready to leave.

Then the Buddha-to-be thinking: “Having achieved success in this my
place of residence, he is going”, came right there to the town centre,

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and slapping his arms,⁹² said: “Come, after fighting with me, you can go.” After laughing: “I have thrown huge men! This dwarf, who is short by nature, is not able to fight even with one of my hands,” and slapping his arms and roaring he came on.

They both grabbed each other by the arm, and the Buddha-to-be after lifting him and swirling him around in the sky, throwing him on the floor, threw him again, breaking his back-bone. All the town dwellers made acclamation, and after slapping their arms, they honoured the Buddha-to-be with clothes, decorations and so on.

The Buddha-to-be, after laying that wrestler straight, and straightening his back-bone, dismissed him saying: “Go from here, and henceforth do not behave in this way.”

Through that deed and its result, after undergoing suffering in his body, head and so on, in rebirth after rebirth, in this his last state of existence, when he became a Buddha he also suffered with pain in the back.

Therefore sometimes when his back pain arose he said to Sāriputta and Moggallāna: “Please teach the Doctrine,” and preparing his robe he lay

⁹² This rare verb may mean *clapping his hands*, but it occurs in other places in connection with wrestling, and may have been a way of brandishing one's strength.

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down: the Buddha was surely not free from the connection with that deed.

So this was said:

Once while I was wrestling I badly injured another wrestler;
Through that deed and through its result I suffered a pain in my back.

[12. Dysentery]

In the twelfth enquiry, called *dysentery*, we hear about him purging bloody dysentery.

In the past, it seems, the Buddha-to-be was reborn in a householder's family, and earned his living through medical treatment. One day while treating a merchant's son who was oppressed by disease he gave medicine and cured him, but because the patient was heedless in giving a gift to him,⁹³ he gave him another medicine, and made him vomit. Then the merchant gave him a great deal of wealth.

Through that deed and its result, he purged with bloody dysentery in rebirth after rebirth. Also in this his last state of existence, near the time he attained Final Emancipation,⁹⁴ through eating tender pork that had been cooked by Cunda the Smith – even though godly nutrients were dropped in by all the gods from the whole universe together with that

⁹³ It seems doctors in those times didn't have a fixed price, but accepted donations; in the Ayurveda tradition in Sri Lanka to this day the same practice prevails.

⁹⁴ See the Discourse about the Great Emancipation (DN 16), especially the opening of the fourth section for the canonical story.

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food – when he had eaten he purged with bloody dysentery, and he who had the strength of a billion⁹⁵ elephants came to destruction.⁹⁶

The Fortunate One on the Full-Moon night of Vesākha in May, while going to Kusināra to attain Final Emancipation, at many places sat down because of thirst,⁹⁷ and after drinking water, having with great suffering nearly reached Kusināra, at the time of dawn attained Final Emancipation. The Lord of the Three Worlds surely could not abandon the connection with that deed.

Therefore it is said:

At the time I was a physician I made a merchant's son purge;
Through that deed and through its result I had amoebic dysentery.

So the Victor explained at the head of the Community of monks,
The one with all knowledge and strength, at the great Lake Anotatta.

⁹⁵ One hundred thousand times ten million.

⁹⁶ The commentary on DN 16 denies that the illness was connected to the food given by Cunda: *bhuttassa udapādi, na pana bhuttapaccayā; it occurred when he had eaten, but not because he had eaten.*

⁹⁷ The commentary to this discourse records that he had to sit down and rest twenty-five times on this his last walk.

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So he answered the enquiries, and according to the arrangement of the tabulation, the unwholesome traditions are said to be complete.

* * *

The Fortunate One is endowed with good fortune, he is a Great Being who has fulfilled the perfections:

Fortunate, devoted to good, having a share of the graces,
Graceful, gone to existences' end, thus he is the Fortunate One.

Thus the one virtuous from the beginning, the one who is God of all Gods, Most Able of the Able, Supreme of those Supreme, Buddha amongst those who are Buddhas, the Greatly Compassionate Fortunate One, spoke about his own life as Buddha and his deeds as Buddha, making him famous and honoured, in what is known as the Traditions about the Buddha, the Publication of the Deeds of the Buddha,⁹⁸ he spoke this Doctrinal Instruction, this Doctrinal Teaching, this discourse.

Thus the Spendour of the Pure Ones,⁹⁹
the Commentary on the Traditions,

The Explanation of the Traditions about the Buddha is Complete

⁹⁸ This seems to be offered as an alternative title.

⁹⁹ This is the official title of the commentary to the Traditions.

The texts which are translated here from the Apadāna describe the previous deeds of the Buddha which led in his last life to various kinds of suffering.

<http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net>

